



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony IN FAVOR of HB 363/SB 806, Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and Maryland Department of Health - Health Care Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants - Report

To: Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate, Immigration,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

February 23, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 363 - Health Insurance – Qualified Resident State Subsidy Program (Access to Care Act).

I encourage you to vote in favor of this bill.

Despite significant contributions to the national and Maryland economies -- income taxes, Social Security and Medicare FICA contributions in excess of \$4 billion annually, working in essential jobs, particularly during the pandemic -- our undocumented immigrant neighbors, many of whom would otherwise qualify for Medical Assistance, the MD Children's Health Program and the MD Health Benefit Exchange are currently ineligible, thus making them and their families susceptible to illnesses and diseases that may threaten our public safety in the long run, if they are not treated. With the requested report, I am sure, we can begin to correct this inequity by ensuring that our immigrant neighbors have access to health insurance provided through the mentioned programs.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, non-citizens are significantly more likely than citizens to be uninsured. In 2019, among the non-elderly population, 25% of lawfully present immigrants and 46% undocumented immigrants (more than four in ten) were uninsured, compared to less than 9% of citizens (one in ten). Among citizen children, those with at least one non-citizen parent are more likely to be uninsured compared to those with citizen parents (9% vs. 5%)

Access to affordable health care is a right not to be denied because of immigration status. The health of all of us, in all our communities is at stake.

I share my faith with more than 4000 Unitarian Universalists in Maryland who are called to promote and affirm justice, equity and compassion in human relations and as such, I urge you to provide equitable access to health care for all Marylanders, including our immigrant neighbors by voting in favor of HB 363.

Thank you.

Sources:

American Immigration Council,

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-maryland>

Kaiser Family Foundation

<https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-and-care-of-undocumented-immigrants/>