



Testimony on SB365/HB588
Access to Care Act of 2023
Position: Favorable with Amendments¹

To Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee; Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee,

My name is Diego Contreras, I am a Social Work Case Manager at Chase Brexton Health Care, and a member of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the country, with over 10,000 members in Maryland and Washington DC. Our union supports the Access to Care Act (SB365/HB588) and is urging you to do the same. As you may be aware, currently, undocumented immigrants with the means to buy into the individual marketplace are unable to do so because of their status. With this bill we want to ensure that immigrant families in Maryland are able to buy into the marketplace, and that this program is equally funded as any other programs in the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange are currently. Affordable and reliable healthcare is a human right and every Marylander should have access to quality healthcare.

As a Social Work Case Manager I help undocumented clients and the work is hard and time-consuming. Because these patients are denied coverage by the State of Maryland one has to check with each individual specialist to see what their financial assistance and billing procedures are. Many require them to incur a balance before they can apply for financial assistance. It is a sorry state of affairs that these Marylanders must go through and it eats away at the time and effort of the limited resources that social services agencies receive.

It is infuriating to think that we as Marylanders cannot share some of our resources with them given that many have fled horrible circumstances to be here. Some have probably left unstable situations that were created by U.S. government intervention, interventions that have probably enriched the U.S. and left their countries in a worse state. And then we see tax breaks given to developers in Baltimore City and it is unclear whether those incentives have been well studied to see if they were beneficial.

Please support the Access to Care Act (SB365/HB588). Thank you.

In Unity,

Diego Contreras, diego.a.contreras@outlook.com

¹ **Proposed Amendment:** Section V - add a number A (5): "That provides State premium assistance and cost-sharing reduction subsidies for Qualified Residents that seek to attain the same level of health plan affordability and limit on out-of-pocket costs experienced by all other health plan purchasers on the exchange."

