

WRITTEN TESTIMONY on HB0329  
Public Health-Commission on Universal Healthcare

Submitted by Patty Snee for Progressive Maryland  
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FAVORABLE

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your work and consideration of a number of important healthcare matters during this current legislative session. At Progressive Maryland we appreciate your efforts to expand healthcare coverage and access, to address the growing crisis of medical debt, and to reign in soaring drug prices.

Many of the problems that everyday Marylanders face when it comes to getting medical treatment, buying prescription drugs, and finding a provider stem from our hard to navigate, confusing and ever changing healthcare system. As you know our system relies heavily on the insurance industry and employer provided insurance. But healthcare costs are skyrocketing for employers and individual policyholders while insurance company profits and CEO compensation are breaking records. This unfortunately has been the case for many years during, coming out of, and well before the global pandemic.

The high cost of premiums, co-pays, and out-of-pocket costs are draining individual and family budgets. The number of insurance company claim denials is mounting every day, putting a growing number of patients and families at great risk. It's time for a change.

Progressive Maryland, along with our community partners in the End Medical Debt campaign held a speakout on Lawyer's Mall yesterday. Most of the stories that people shared about their struggles with getting healthcare came down to being denied care somewhere in the system (even when having a "good" policy) and/or being unable to afford health insurance.

It's time to look at moving away from our reliance on private insurance. HB 0329: Public Health-Commission on Universal Healthcare gives Maryland a way to explore just how we can do that.

HB 0329 will give us a chance to look at alternatives and options by studying how a single payer system might work and be organized. Hundreds of favorable studies, reports, and reviews, including from government agencies, exist about a single payer model. It's time to harness that data and information to examine the benefits we could realize and to explore what's possible. There's little expense required to engage a Commission and this process. Any time and resources spent on the Commission and its work will be well worth it given the positive outcomes we could see.

Relying on a more efficient single payer model to deliver healthcare to folks makes sense. It means a much greater percentage of the money we spend as a state would go to the actual care and treatment people need, and not to pay for all the bloated costs and inefficiencies in the private insurance sector.

On behalf of Progressive Maryland's thousands of individual members across the state, our regional chapters and our Healthcare Task Force I urge you to pass HB0329. We believe that healthcare is a fundamental human right. It's time to make a real commitment to guaranteeing that right and the Commission's work is a critical way to get started.

Please vote yes for this bill.

Thank you.

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