



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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[www.womensdemocraticclub.org](http://www.womensdemocraticclub.org)

**House Bill 588**  
**Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)**  
**Health and Government Operations Committee – February 23, 2023**  
**SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic clubs in Montgomery County with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

**WDC urges the passage of HB0588 to extend access to health care to qualified Maryland residents.**

The need for this bill is clear, and urgent. A September 2022 report from the National Immigration Forum<sup>1</sup> notes that under current law undocumented immigrants, immigrants without permanent residency status such as DACA recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and nonimmigrant visa holders, are ineligible for most federal and state healthcare programs. One exception is the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act which provides that every patient, regardless of immigration status, has access to emergency medical care. The Special Supplemental Nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) also provides limited nutritional services and health care.

According to a May 2022 report by La Clinica del Pueblo<sup>2</sup> approximately 225,000 to 275,000 Maryland residents are without access to health care due to their immigration status, including 27,500 Temporary Protected Status holders. Many residents categorized as immigrants who do not have access to healthcare are front-line workers providing essential services in grocery stores, restaurants, retail stores, and construction. Again, citing the La Clinica del Pueblo report, 31% are immigrants from El Salvador, 14% from Guatemala, 9% from Honduras, and 9% from Mexico. They work low wage jobs where their employers may not offer health insurance or if they do, it is unaffordable. As a result, many of these Maryland residents only seek care in an emergency or defer routine care, leaving treatable conditions to worsen.

As advocates for women and children, WDC members find this situation to be unacceptable. Our communities will thrive when everyone can have their health care needs met in a timely manner. **We ask for your support for HB0588 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Diana E. Conway  
WDC President

Sharon H. Cranford  
WDC Advocacy Committee

<sup>1</sup> Fact Sheet: Undocumented Immigrants and Federal Health Care Benefits, September 21, 2022

<https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-undocumented-immigrants-and-federal-health-care-benefits/>

<sup>2</sup> Advancing Health Access Solutions for Immigrants in Maryland, May 23, 2022. <https://lcpd.org/news-and-stories/stories/advancing-health-access-solutions-for-immigrants-in-maryland>