

February 23, 2023

Statement on House Bill 588
Health Insurance Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)
House Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: Support with Amendment

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of more than 1500 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We strongly urge you to support House Bill 588 to achieve equitable access to health care for undocumented immigrants in Maryland.

The Affordable Care Act has allowed 28 million people across the country to gain access to affordable care. In Maryland, since the establishment of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) in 2011, which allows individuals and small businesses to purchase affordable health coverage, our uninsured rate has almost halved from 12% to 6%. The MHBE is funded in part by a mandated diversion of premium tax revenues and in recent years it has not spent all of the mandated appropriations.

Although Maryland has taken bold steps toward ensuring everyone has access to care, the immigrant community has been left behind. More than 275,000 undocumented immigrants, who make daily contributions to communities and our economy, remain ineligible for coverage. Multiple states across the country have established comprehensive programs to extend coverage to immigrants regardless of their immigration status.

House Bill 588 addresses critical health disparities faced by the immigrant community in Maryland by expanding the Affordable Care Act to all Marylanders who meet the regular eligibility, regardless of their immigration status, and establishes a State Subsidy Program to ensure newly covered individuals have the funding to receive care.

Over the last several decades, the need for healthcare coverage has been a consistent priority for Maryland's immigrant community. Maryland has the fifth-highest percentage of an immigrant population - leaving a significant number of our residents without care. House Bill 588 is a crucial step in addressing access to care for all Marylanders.

To assure equitable treatment we also support a rate **amendment to provide that newly qualified individuals under HB 588 will receive the same subsidy** as all other individuals covered under the Affordable Care Act.

We urge you to give House Bill 588 a favorable report with the 'equity amendment' mentioned above.