

**Baptist Ministers' Night Conference of  
Baltimore and Vicinity (BMNCBV)**  
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**TESTIMONY IN FAVOR WITH AMENDMENT OF HOUSE BILL 588  
BEFORE THE HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE  
BY REV. DR. SANDRA CONNER, PRESIDENT, BMNCBV  
February 23, 2023**

Chair Peña-Melnyk and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit favorable testimony for HB 588. HB 588 would open up private health coverage through Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility criteria, regardless of immigration status. We support this bill because we want to make sure there are no barriers to immigrants getting health coverage, and that subsidies exist to make sure coverage is affordable at the same level as for other Marylanders.

In Maryland, over 275,000 undocumented immigrants are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. Multiple states have established comprehensive care programs to extend coverage to immigrants regardless of their immigration status. This has had the highest impact on Black and Latino residents, who have become sicker, hospitalized at higher rates, and die younger as they are forced to face life or death situations due to their exclusion in programs such as the Affordable Care Act.

We understand that CASA is supporting a proposed amendment, which we support as well: **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."**

The Access to Care Act is a step toward ending healthcare disparities for immigrant communities in Maryland. It would ensure access to primary care, resulting in higher early detection rates and better long-term management of chronic diseases and serious illnesses. It would decrease the amount of costly emergency room visits and mortality rates. We urge a favorable report for HB 588.

We thank you in advance for your actions towards HB 588.

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