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TO: The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair
House, Health and Government Operations Committee
FROM: Office of the Attorney General
RE: HB0588 – Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program
(Access to Care Act): **Support**

The Office of the Attorney General supports the Access to Care Act which would allow qualified residents, as defined by the Act, to purchase plans on the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange regardless of immigration status. A subsidy program to help reduce the cost of coverage would be funded with pass-through funds from the federal government. The Act requires the MHBE to apply for a State Innovation Waiver and if approved, establish and implement the program.

The number of Marylanders without insurance coverage has reduced dramatically since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, but the estimated 275,000 undocumented immigrants who reside in Maryland and share our schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods are unable to obtain health care coverage due to current state and federal laws which lock them out of eligibility for even full-price coverage. Lack of quality, affordable health care places these friends, coworkers, and neighbors at risk of preventable illnesses which then impacts their opportunities for education, work, and housing.

This Act would effectively provide qualified residents essential access to healthcare services, reduce inequities, decrease the uninsured rate, decrease emergency care costs, and ultimately improve public health and health outcomes for all Maryland residents.

Support of the Access to Care Act is consistent with the goals and priorities of the Office of the Attorney General to promote policies and initiatives that combat systemic inequities and protect the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of all Marylanders.

We urge the Committee's favorable support of HB0588, Access to Care Act.