

Ezra Towne

3010 Blueridge Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20902

703.609.1092
ezra.towne@gmail.com

Favorable Testimony on Bill SB0705: Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)

February 20, 2024

Chair Senator Pamela Beidle, Vice Chair Senator Katherine Klausmeier, and esteemed members of the Finance Committee,

I write to you today as a concerned resident of District 18 in Wheaton, Maryland and a parent of two students who attend Montgomery County Public Schools. **My testimony on this bill is favorable, and I urge you to move SB0705, the Access to Care Act, promptly through the Finance Committee with a favorable report.**

SB0705 would allow the majority of undocumented, latine residents in the neighborhood of Wheaton Hills access to health care provided by the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. Highland Elementary School, where my 11 year old is one of a handful of white children, has a minority enrollment of 93%, and 72% enrollment of economically disadvantaged students.¹ The same access to and affordability of health care would extend to the students and families of my 16 year old's school, Albert Einstein High School. Most of the minority children at these two schools are from spanish speaking homes, as are the majority of economically disadvantaged students.

The student body at Highland includes, primarily, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Ecuadorian children - many of which are undocumented residents of Maryland who are afraid to seek medical care due to one of two reasons - it's extremely expensive and fear of deportation.

While Highland Elementary is lucky enough to have a school based health center to help alleviate some of the stress caused to parents who work two or three jobs to pay the bills, don't have time to get medical care on their time away at work, or who don't have health insurance; this is NOT enough.

To be frank, I am worried about the health of my 11 year old's and 16 year old's school friends and their families. In most cases, a lack of health insurance directly correlates to the inability to seek and pay for both routine and critical medical care. This is simply not acceptable in any way.

As the students of Highland Elementary move through the pipeline to middle and high school, the demographics of the student body do not change much. Newport Middle school has a ratio of 82% minority students², and Albert Einstein High School has a ratio of 76.2% minority

Ezra Towne

3010 Blueridge Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20902

703.609.1092
ezra.towne@gmail.com

enrollment.³ The numbers seem to decrease slightly once the students from other elementary school districts are fed into Newport Mill Middle School and Albert Einstein High School - but the fact that the overwhelming majority of these students are from latine households does not change.

For the health and financial security of my neighbors and their families, and the friends of my two kids aged 16 and 11, I respectfully ask the Finance committee for a favorable report on SB0705, so that it moves forward for a vote within the full Senate.

Sincerely,



Ezra Towne
District 18

¹ U.S. News and World Report, Highland Elementary School 2024 report
<https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/maryland/highland-elementary-216226>

² U.S. News and World Report, Newport Mill Middle School 2024 report
<https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/maryland/newport-mill-middle-266389>

³ U.S. News and World Report, Albert Einstein High School 2024 report
<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/maryland/districts/montgomery-county-public-schools/albert-einstein-high-school-9136>