

Dear Honorable Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alvina Pan. I have lived in Maryland my entire life - I was born here in Annapolis, I went to the University of Maryland for college, and now I attend Johns Hopkins University as a medical student, hoping to one day, serve as a physician for my communities.

As a second generation Asian American, I haven't undergone the same cultural, financial, and linguistic difficulties often inherent in the immigrant experience. And yet, at each point in my life, whether it was volunteering in the emergency department at Howard county hospital or working with my patients in a primary care clinic, I have seen how undocumented immigrants have been barred from the medical field.

I worked as a medical assistant at a Federally Qualified Health Center in Montgomery county all 4 years throughout undergrad. A medical center dedicated to serving the uninsured and low income, we never ask our patients about their citizenship status, hoping to serve as a safe haven for those who feel like they have nowhere else to go. But it is not enough. I have seen a pregnant mother, having a first-trimester bleeding, refuse to go for an ultrasound in fear that immigration agents might be waiting. I have seen these members of our community forgo screenings, medications, and other essential medical care for the sake of cost, Insulin dependent patients who do not show up for appointments out of fear, forced to ration.

And I am sure as all of you know - the effects of deferred health care will be felt in many ways - cost being a major one. Hospitals and emergency departments are expensive, schools will feel the impact with sicker children.

SB705 addresses these critical health disparities faced by the immigrant community in Maryland in a very simple way - allowing Maryland residents, regardless of immigration status, to purchase insurance on the Exchange. There should be no additional cost to the state for this bill - it is a win-win. This common-sense legislation is uncontroversial and aligns Maryland with its values of protecting life and treating all people with dignity, respect, and care. As a future physician in Maryland, it is my responsibility, as it is yours, to fight for our most vulnerable, to close this uninsured gap and to create a more equitable healthcare system