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BILL NO.: **SB 705**

TITLE: Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program
 (Access to Care Act)

SPONSOR: Senator Hayes

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 21, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** SB 705 – Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act). This legislation would require that the Maryland Health Benefits Exchange (MHBE) request a 1332 waiver to allow Maryland residents who currently do not have lawful residency status to access the Exchange and allow these residents to pay for health care insurance. This bill would have minimal economic cost to the state.

Close to 350,000 Maryland residents do not have health care, more than 16,000 are Baltimore County residents. On the Exchange, tax-paying Maryland residents are able to access plans that are offered by carriers that are not available off the Exchange. Currently, uninsured Baltimore County residents must use Federally Qualified Health Clinics or emergency rooms for primary and preventive care. This can result in individuals waiting hours for treatment or being turned away due to limited capacity. Without access to primary care, undocumented immigrants may resort to emergency rooms for basic healthcare needs, exacerbating already excessive emergency room wait times.

SB705 will help address the many health disparities faced by immigrants residing in Maryland. Regular check-ups and early intervention can lead to better health outcomes and lower overall healthcare costs. Healthy residents are better able to work and contribute to their communities.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB705 from the Senate Finance Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs, at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.