

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

My name is Delia Friel. I grew up in Montgomery County and I now live in Baltimore. I am currently a medical student at Johns Hopkins University. The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of Johns Hopkins University or the Johns Hopkins Health System.

As a medical student, I am involved in the Johns Hopkins' Refugee Health Partnership and local Baltimore organizations, including Asylee Women's Enterprise, dedicated to connecting migrants to health care resources. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 705, the Access to Care Act.

Through my coursework and Johns Hopkins Refugee Health Partnership, I have learned and seen first-hand the value of being able to access affordable and timely care. I remember listening to an undocumented middle-aged woman explain how frustrating and difficult it has been to look a provider to manage her chronic condition. Sitting with her in a Johns Hopkins classroom, I felt an immense disconnect between the well-resourced hospital next door and inability for my community members to access such resources. She described waiting until her condition deteriorates to a point she has to go to the emergency room for care. Her story motivates me to be here today and advocate for the Access to Care Act. This bill has the power to help this woman and many more access timely and affordable comprehensive care.

This bill is particularly important because 30% of those uninsured are denied healthcare coverage because of their immigration status. This bill allows more Marylanders to access the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange for the opportunity to buy health insurance. Furthermore, this bill would help expand access to primary care which we know results in better long-term management of chronic diseases and serious illnesses and ultimately in healthier and wealthier communities.

As a future physician, I aspire to practice medicine in a Maryland in which patients, regardless of their immigration status, have access to comprehensive healthcare and are treated with dignity and respect. In summary, I urge you to support SB 705.

Sincerely,  
Delia Friel