

SB0705\_\_Catherine Bergmann\_\_FAV

Date of Hearing: 2/21/2024

Catherine Bergmann, PhD, MPH

Riverdale Park, MD20737

**TESTIMONY ON SB-0705 POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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

**TO:** Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Finance Committee

**FROM:** Catherine Bergmann, PhD, MPH

My name is Catherine Bergmann. I have been a resident of District 22 for over 30 years. I submit this testimony in support of SB0705, Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act.)

I write to you as a retired, licensed psychologist with a background in public health.

Passing this bill would allow more than 275,000 immigrants to access health insurance through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. If the recent pandemic taught us nothing else, we learned that our neighbor's health is important to our own. Maryland can only benefit by increasing access to health care. Improved access to health care would very likely reduce both morbidity and mortality in our state.

As a psychologist, I am well aware of the need for and benefits of mental health services. There is currently an epidemic of mental health problems among our youth. This bill would provide a sorely needed avenue for access to mental health care.

I also write from my own experience as the child of refugees. My German Jewish parents escaped from Nazi Germany just before the worst of the Holocaust. The fascists of Nazi Germany targeted immigrants early on. We see that happening in the United States right now, as some here blame all the problems in our country on immigrants. But I know that we're better than that in Maryland. Our humanity, compassion, and informed action can be an example to the rest of the country.

My hard-working immigrant neighbors are trying mightily to take care of their families. It is also simply the right thing to do to give them the same access to private health care on the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange that I have.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB-0705.**

Thank you.