

My name is Ashley Tetens, and I am a second-year medical student at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. I am here to speak in support of SB705. The views I'm sharing today are my own and do not necessarily represent those of my school or program.

I attended Johns Hopkins University for my undergraduate education where I majored in Africana Studies and Molecular Biology. Here, I was introduced to the ways in which immigrant communities are denied access to life saving care. Last year, during my first year in medical school, I had the opportunity to work with a client who was seeking asylum. This provided me with my first tangible exposure to the challenges immigrant populations face when they enter the United States and need access to medical care.

When my client arrived in the United States, he did not have much with him but his physical being. He had lost his family, his possessions, and his sense of the comfort of home. Unfortunately, my client was a survivor of torture and so the one thing he did have with him, his physical being, was failing him. He could not run, as he had once loved. He could barely eat. He had chronic pain. He had emotional and psychiatric challenges.

Fortunately for my client, he was part of an organization that used grant funding to support his medical care costs. He was able to get access to antidepressants. We were able to get an imaging study to find out why he was having difficulty eating and we were able to resolve an infection that, left untreated, frequently leads to cancer.

By the end of the term, our client was a whole new person. For the first time, I saw him have hope. I saw him develop dreams and get back into running. And I got to see a glimpse into how full of life he must have been before he endured what he did in his home country. I find it hard to imagine him making this transformation if he did not have access to care that was covered by the program he was a part of.

This bill will allow people to acquire health insurance and get access to life-changing healthcare. As a future physician, I'm here to advocate for the passing of SB 705 to ensure that all my future patients, whether immigrants or not, will be able to have as positive of a transformation as my client of this past year did.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ashley Tetens