



American Lung Association Testimony Senate Bill 705

Senate Finance

February 20, 2024

Support

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeir and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of Senate Bill 705 – Access to Care Act. The American Lung Association supports policies to ensure all people have access to quality and affordable health coverage.

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease, through research, education and advocacy. The work of the Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to improve the air we breathe; to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families; and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases.

The American Lung Association supports reforms to health insurance programs that ensure universal access to quality and affordable healthcare services, preventive care, and appropriate specialty care for all consistent with national guidelines. The American Lung Association opposes discriminatory barriers to healthcare coverage and firmly believes that all people living within the United States should have access to affordable, adequate, and accessible health care.

Noncitizens include lawfully present and undocumented immigrants. Many individuals live in mixed immigration status families that may include lawfully present immigrants, undocumented immigrants, and/or citizens. One in four children has an immigrant parent, and the majority of these children are citizens.¹

The Lung Association believes that every individual living in Maryland should have access to affordable and comprehensive health coverage. Senate Bill 705 would get us closer to that reality by allowing qualified residents to purchase coverage on the exchange, regardless of immigration status.

Many lawfully present immigrants who are eligible for coverage remain uninsured because immigrant families face a range of enrollment barriers, including fear, confusion about eligibility policies, difficulty navigating the enrollment process, and language and literacy challenges. Uninsured undocumented immigrants are ineligible for coverage options due to their immigration status. In the absence of coverage, they remain reliant on safety net clinics and hospitals for care and often go without needed care.¹

The Lung Association strongly supports this bill as a way of increasing access to healthcare for all individuals living in Maryland. The American Lung Association thanks you for the opportunity to provide comments and express our support of Senate Bill 705 to continue Maryland's commitment to a healthier community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aleks Casper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Aleks Casper
Director of Advocacy, Maryland
202-719-2810

¹KFF, "Health Coverage and Care of Immigrants", December 2022, available at: <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-and-care-of-immigrants/>