

**Carol Stern
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**TESTIMONY ON HB728- FAVORABLE
Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program
(Access to Care Act)**

TO: Chair Pena-Melnyk and Vice Chair Cullison and members of the Health & Government Operations Committee

FROM: Carol Stern

My name is Carol Stern, and I am testifying in favor of HB728, as a resident of Montgomery County's District 16 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda.

Jewish tradition teaches that human life has infinite value and that the preservation of life supersedes almost all other considerations. We have seen that health inequities were exacerbated during the pandemic. We must use this teaching in developing health policy for Maryland to make sure that **every resident no matter what their immigration status is has access to the highest attainable standard of healthcare. No one should get sick or die because of their income or immigration status.**

HB728 is not only critical legislation for our undocumented community, but it is also sound policy for the state. Everyone should have access to the highest attainable standard of health services. No one should get sick or die because of their income or immigration status. Since its establishment in 2010, the Affordable Care Act has granted 28 million people across the country access to affordable health care. However, more than 275,000 undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for insurance through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.

Access to routine yearly checkups will ensure that our undocumented immigrant children, youth, and adults live better, healthier, and more productive lifestyles that ultimately make our communities more vibrant. This common-sense legislation is uncontentious and aligns Maryland with its values of protecting life and treating all people with dignity, respect, and care. Opening up the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status, would reduce health inequities and prevent the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable with amendments report on HB728.