

**Testimony in favor with amendments of HB728**

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

To: Hon. Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair, Hon. Bonnie Cullison, Vice-chair and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Jerry Kickenson

Date: February 6, 2024

I am writing in **favor of House Bill 728**, Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)

Since its establishment in 2010, the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) 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 ACA's Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.

Passing this legislation would require the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange to establish and operate the Qualified Resident Enrollment Program, which would make qualified health insurance plans available to all Marylanders who meet the regular ACA eligibility criteria, regardless of their immigration status.

Greater access to health care would reduce emergency room visits and mortality rates, as well as increase rates of early detection and improve the long-term management of chronic diseases and serious illnesses. This legislation would make our state a safer, healthier place for all by reducing health inequities and preventing the preventable spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19.

**Everyone in Maryland deserves to live a healthy life, regardless of where they were born and what documents they have. We are obligated to make sure that those of us who were not born in our community are as safe, and as healthy, as those of us who were.**

I respectfully urge you to reach a **favorable** report for HB728.

Respectfully yours,

Jerry Kickenson

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