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BILL NO.:   **HB 728**

TITLE: –Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)

SPONSOR: Delegate Cullison

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 8, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 728- Access to Care. This legislation would require that MHBE request a 1332 waiver to allow Maryland residents who currently do not have lawful residency status to access the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the opportunity to pay for health care insurance. This bill would have minimal economic cost to the state.

Close to 350,000 Maryland residents do not have health care, and more than 16,000 are Baltimore County residents. On the Exchange, tax-paying Maryland residents would be able to access plans that are offered by carriers that are not available off the Exchange.

Currently, uninsured and uninsurable Baltimore County residents must avail themselves of Federally Qualified Health Clinics or emergency rooms to treat primary and preventive diseases; often, this results in individuals waiting hours for treatment or being turned away because of limited capacity. Without access to primary care, undocumented immigrants may resort to emergency rooms for basic healthcare needs, resulting in overcrowded emergency rooms and increased costs for emergency care.

HB 728 will help address the many health disparities faced by immigrants residing in Maryland. Regular check-ups and early intervention can lead to better health outcomes and lower overall healthcare costs for individuals and the state. Healthy individuals are better able to participate in society, work, and contribute positively to their communities.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 728. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, director of Government Affairs, at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.