



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE  
OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal  
Public Policy  
Network

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 728  
FAVORABLE**

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

TO: Honorable Chair Peña-Melynk, Honorable Vice Chair Bonnie Cullison, and  
Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Rev. Kenneth Phelps, Jr., The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland

DATE: February 8, 2024

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The Episcopal Church teaches that access to quality and affordable health care is – along with nutrition and housing – a basic human right and the Church supports those efforts to provide universal and equitable access for all, including immigrants, undocumented or otherwise. Our General Convention urges all Episcopalians to advocate for just and adequate health care policies and views this as a mission of the Church and a vital component in the promotion of healthy American communities.

The Diocese of Maryland is pleased to offer a favorable testimony in support of the Maryland HB 728. Although Maryland has taken bold steps toward ensuring everyone has access to care, the immigrant community has been left behind. 275K+ undocumented immigrants in Maryland are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) due to their immigration status.

Multiple states across the country have established comprehensive programs to extend coverage to immigrants regardless of their immigration status, and despite the profound cultural contributions immigrants make to the state, along with their essential role in the Maryland workforce and millions in contributions to society and the economy through federal, state, and local taxes - they are still ineligible for the Affordable Care Act.

HB 728 addresses critical health disparities faced by the immigrant community in Maryland by expanding the Affordable Care Act to all Marylanders, regardless of their



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immigration status, by a simple act of requiring MHBE to request a 1332 waiver to allow Maryland residents, regardless of immigration status, to purchase insurance on the Exchange.

HB 728 represents an important milestone in our journey toward creating a resilient healthcare system. This common-sense legislation is uncontentious and aligns Maryland with its values of protecting our communities and treating all people with dignity, respect, and care. Just what Jesus would do.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report