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**Testimony on HB0728 – Position: Favorable
Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)**

My name is Deedee Jacobsohn and I am a resident of District 16 in Montgomery County. I am a member of B'nai Israel Congregation in Rockville, which is a SEA Change congregation—one of a network of synagogues in the DMV working for racial equity and social justice, although the opinions expressed here are my own. I am submitting this testimony **in support of HB0728: Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act).**

The Torah states that “the stranger that dwells with you shall be to you as the home-born among you and you shall love him as yourself (Leviticus 19:34). This commandment is referenced three dozen times, more than any other in the Torah. As Jews, and indeed as human beings, we are obligated to protect and care for all members of our community, no matter where they were born or what documents they may lack. **HB728 would expand access to affordable health care to qualified Maryland residents, regardless of their immigration status.**

Two years ago, a fifth-grade boy vomited and then collapsed in front of his classmates in my neighborhood elementary school. He died at the hospital. His family was devastated, his classmates were traumatized, and the community was outraged. His mother later said she did not take him to the hospital because she heard it was very expensive and they were undocumented immigrants. Imagine if she had access to affordable health care despite her immigration status-- she could have taken him to the doctor when he first complained of a stomachache, weeks earlier.

Relying on emergency rooms for medical care is a terrible approach to health care. It means emergency rooms are busier and it leads to more deaths since chronic diseases and serious illnesses are not detected sooner. Access to affordable health care would enable children, teens, and adults to have regular routine checkups and keep them healthier, while reducing emergency room visits as well as uncompensated care costs for the uninsured.

In order to leave no one behind, Maryland must treat all of its residents with dignity and respect and access to affordable health care is an important step towards that goal.

For these reasons, **I respectfully urge the committee to return a favorable report on HB0728.**