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February 8, 2024

COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations

BILL: HB 728 – Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act)

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is the largest independent health philanthropy in Maryland. We are committed to a Howard County free from systemic inequities, where all people can live abundant and healthy lives.

The Foundation is pleased to support HB 728 – Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act).

HB 728 would allow all Marylanders to access the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (Maryland’s Affordable Care Act marketplace), regardless of their immigration status. Currently, across the state, over 275,000 undocumented immigrants are unable to access the state’s Health Benefit Exchange. Undocumented workers often operate on the frontlines of our economy, holding positions critical to developing our infrastructure and keeping our small businesses afloat. These workers are often more vulnerable to illness, hospitalization and death – worsening health disparities among Black and Latino residents.

Health equity is central to the mission of the Horizon Foundation. Along with a broad coalition of health providers, grassroots advocacy organizations and health institutions, the Foundation pressed for the successful adoption of the Healthy Babies Equity Act (Chapter 28 of 2022), which will extend comprehensive medical care and other health care services to certain undocumented pregnant women and their children. Locally, we also convened the Howard County Health Justice Coalition, which successfully secured \$1.7 million in local funding last year to ensure vital prenatal and postpartum care is available and affordable for uninsured and underinsured women and children in Howard County and that together we work to increase the percentage of children born at a healthy weight.

The Horizon Foundation of Howard County, Inc.

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HB 728 will ensure that immigration status is no longer a barrier for Maryland residents to purchase a health insurance plan. We believe that everyone in our state – regardless of immigration status – should have access to compassionate and affordable health care. For this reason, the Foundation **SUPPORTS HB 728 and urges a FAVORABLE report.**

Thank you for your consideration.