

HB728\_ZackaryBerger\_FAV

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

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 8, 2024

To: Honorable Chair Peña-Melnyk, and Members of the Committee

From: Zackary Berger, MD, PhD

As a Baltimore resident, primary care physician, and Interim Medical Director of the Esperanza Center Health Clinic, I am pleased to provide testimony in support HB 728- Health Insurance - Qualified Resident Enrollment Program (Access to Care Act). I am also a supporter of CASA.

Esperanza Center sees uninsured patients in Baltimore. Almost a third of all uninsured people in Maryland are undocumented. These are people who have come here for a better life, and it is indefensible from a moral or public-health perspective to deny them insurance. I see patients who are not eligible for organ transplants, effective care for diabetes, or treatment of their cancer. I have to look these people in their face and tell them that our system thinks their lives are less worthy. Maryland can do better. Let's be as good as other states of the Union who understand that immigrants are necessary to make our cities and state better.

There are nativist tendencies in this state and nation. We must resist them with everything we have, and support all the residents of our state. We can't keep people healthy, we can't keep our state healthy, if we cut off a third of all residents from insurance. What would you do for your family? Let's do the same for our Maryland family. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB728.

Zackary Berger, MD, PhD