



Testimony on HB 278/SB 705
Health Insurance – Qualified Resident Enrollment Program
Access to Care Act
Position: Favorable

To Chair Pena-Melnyk and Members of the Health & Government Operations Committee;

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Every Marylander needs to have the ability to access medical coverage when they need it. 1199SEIU supports SB365/HB588 to expand health coverage to the 350,000 Maryland residents who do not have healthcare.

This bill ensures that residents who are earning and paying taxes have access to the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and the opportunity to pay for health care insurance. Although the Affordable Care Act allowed a monumental increase in terms of healthcare coverage for many Maryland families, this unfortunately did not apply to many immigrant families, including a third of those who do not have insurance and do not currently have legal residency status. The Access to Care Act would change this by ensuring that all income-eligible Marylanders can purchase coverage through the exchange, regardless of their citizenship status.

For 1199SEIU members, this bill is essential for two reasons. First, our members understand that increasing the number of insured individuals also means less of a burden on our short-staffed hospitals. When patients can afford primary care, they are less likely to end up in the hospital. Any step to provide individuals with healthcare coverage to alleviate this strain in short, staffed facilities would benefit both our hospital resources and improve patient care.

Second, many of our members come from immigrant families themselves. They know the benefits of what health insurance can do to change the lives of immigrant families and believe that without health insurance, it leaves many Marylanders at risk of serious health concerns. We ask this Committee to give a **favorable** report on HB 278/SB705.

In Unity,

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