



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

The Maryland Episcopal
Public Policy
Network

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 417

****FAVORABLE****

Public Health – Commission on Universal Health Care

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 6, 2025

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. 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.

Since 2009 the Episcopal Church has urged passage of ‘legislation establishing a “single payer” universal health care program which would provide health care coverage for all of the people of the United States’ and has called for government on all levels to ‘assess, negotiate and deliberate the range of proposed health care policy options in the effort to reach the goal of universal health care coverage, and to pursue short-term, incremental, innovative and creative approaches to universal health care until a “single payer” universal health care program is established.’ The Episcopal Church is committed to working with all people of good will to finally and concretely realize the goal of universal health care coverage; and will continue to advocate passage of legislation consistent with this resolution.

Although Maryland has taken bold steps toward ensuring everyone has access to care, many are still denied this basic right, and many more who do have insurance find the high cost of premiums, deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses too great a burden on their family and individual budgets.

A single-payer system means all residents could get medically necessary procedures and services, as well as preventative care at any time. From mental health treatment to prenatal care to prescription drugs, no one has to worry about not receiving treatment for an illness or disease or preventive care or a life-threatening emergency. Citizens would no longer face financial hardship or bankruptcy to receive care. People would be able to visit the doctor without fear of being unable to pay. This would ensure no one held off going to the doctor for a check-up or important procedure because of a fear about the price of care.

The Diocese of Maryland requests a Favorable report