

March 30, 2023

The Honorable President Bill Ferguson
The Honorable Chair Melony Griffith
11 Bladen St, Annapolis, MD 21401

CC: Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Senator Pamela Beidle, Senator Arthur Ellis, Senator Dawn Gile,
Senator Antonio Hayes, Senator Benjamin Kramer, Senator Clarence Lam

RE: 100+ Organizations Request Senate Leadership to Pass the Access to Care Act

Dear President Ferguson and Madam Chair Griffith,

We, the undersigned 100+ advocacy, labor, business, community service providers, and faith organizations, write to respectfully share our concern regarding the lack of action in the Senate Finance Committee on the Access to Care Act (HB588). We call on your leadership to do everything in your power to ensure this critical legislation is voted out of committee and passed into law. We believe that healthcare is a human right and strongly support our state's continued efforts to expand healthcare coverage and close the uninsured gap.

As you know, the General Assembly has a long history of welcoming immigrant families and supporting strong policies that promote healthcare for all Maryland communities. The Access to Care Act aligns with those core values and would profoundly impact the health and well-being of immigrant families and all Marylanders.

The Access to Care Act removes immigration status as an eligibility requirement for purchasing a health plan through Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE), requiring the state to seek federal approval by submitting a state innovation waiver. As amended in the House of Delegates, the bill requires MHBE to submit a report to the General Assembly with its plans for implementation, including the source and amount of funding for the subsidies, the parameters of the program, and the number of individuals expected to be eligible for subsidies. This critical legislation will be the first step in ensuring that valued members of the community receive the critical and often life-saving preventative care needed.

Since the creation of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, with your leadership, the uninsured rate in Maryland has continued to decrease, making Maryland one of the top states in ensuring insurance access to residents. Many Marylanders seeking to be insured can go online and browse for coverage through our online portal, Maryland Health Connection, find affordable monthly premiums, and get insured. However, this powerful benefit does not extend to immigrant families without immigration status. This group includes critical members of our community, including DACA recipients and lawfully present individuals and families who have not been permanent residents for five or more years, making up 27% of the uninsured in Maryland. These individuals and families are our neighbors, our caregivers, and essential members of our communities who make meaningful contributions to our state. In order to foster vibrant, healthy communities where all Marylanders can thrive, it is imperative that every individual in the state has access to quality healthcare.

HB588 will ensure that over 275,000 uninsured Marylanders who are currently foregoing routine checkups, and being hospitalized for health conditions that could have been prevented, have access to a doctor when and where they need it. Integrating this excluded community into our healthcare system

will decrease the patient load on our overburdened hospital system and community clinics. Further, ensuring that our overall healthcare system is equipped to the best of its abilities.

Including this uninsured population in the insurance market will not only provide for healthier communities, it will also provide for a more balanced financing of our healthcare costs. MHBE projects this coverage expansion can reduce overall individual market premiums that could result in reductions of about 2 to 4% per year. Another cost-savings that expanding access to care would provide is in the uncompensated costs incurred by the state when uninsured individuals seek costly emergency department care. In FY21, Maryland Hospitals provided over \$780 million in uncompensated care, with some hospitals paying upward of 10% of their total allocated budget towards this expense. The state is covering the most expensive form of care there is: emergency care. It is in the best interest of all parties within the healthcare system to establish a clear pathway for those in need to care to access it.

States such as Washington, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, and even the District of Columbia have already expanded healthcare access to or established new programs for immigrant families ineligible for care through Medicaid or the Affordable Care Act. Maryland can continue to be a leader in caring for our most vulnerable.

We care for all our residents, regardless of where they come from. We strongly urge you to prioritize this legislation as Maryland continues to decrease the uninsured rate and create a more equitable healthcare system.

Respectfully the undersigned organizations,

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East
32BJ SEIU
A and D Contracting Services
ACLU of Maryland
Ask the Climate Question, LLC
Advance Maryland
African Communities Together
AFSCME Maryland Council 3
AIDS Action Baltimore
Allergy & Asthma Network
Asian American Center of Frederick
Association of Community Services of Howard County
Attendance Works
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition
Court Appointed Special Advocates
CASA
Catholic Charities of Baltimore
Caucus of African American Leaders
Care for Your Health, Inc
Central Maryland Ecumenical Council
Centro de Apoyo Familiar

Chase Brexton Health Care
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Citizens Policing Project
Clinton Street Community Center
Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Columbia Democratic Club
Comité Latino de Baltimore
Common Cause Maryland
C.O. Communications, LLC
Crossroads Community Food Network
DE-MD Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Disability Rights Maryland
Dreamers2gether, Inc
Economic Action Maryland
Elders Climate Action Maryland
End Medical Debt Maryland
Environmental Justice Ministry Team, Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Equity Matters
Frederick County Progressives a Chapter of Progressive Maryland
GWU Latino Health Research Center
Gwynn Oak United Methodist Church
Health Care for the Homeless
Hermandad de Sigma Iota Alpha, Incorporada
High Note Consulting, LLC
Homewood Friends Meeting (Quaker)
Horizon Foundation
Howard County (HoCo) Climate Action
Howard County Coalition for Immigrant Justice
Ibiza Events Center, LLC
Identity, Inc
Independence Now
Indivisible – Howard County
Indivisible – Central Maryland
Institutes for Behavioral Resources, Inc
Isaiah Baptist Church
Jews United for Justice
Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF)
Kaiser Permanente
La Clinica del Pueblo
Langley Park Civic Association
Latin American Youth Center
Latina Pathways
Latino Democrats of Prince George's County
Latino Health Steering Committee of Montgomery County

League of Women Voters of Maryland
LeanToo Consulting, LLC
LiUNA! Local 11
Locust Point Community Garden
Making Changes
Maryland Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network
Maryland Health Care for All! Coalition
Maryland Hospital Association
Maryland Latin Dance Club
Maryland Latinos Unidos
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Maryland Nonprofits
Maryland Poor People's Campaign
Maryland Public Health Association
Maryland Rise
Maryland State Conference NAACP
Marylanders Against Poverty
MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society
Molly Perkins Hauck, Ph.D., LLC, Licensed Psychologist
Mount Pleasant Family Dentistry
MPR Business Solutions, LLC
Muslim Community Cultural Center of Baltimore
Maryland Federation of National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE)
National Alliance on Mental Illness – Maryland
National Housing Trust
National Immigration Law Center
National Partnership for New Americans
Nonprofit Montgomery
Our Revolution Maryland
Out for Justice
PG Changemakers
Planned Parenthood of Maryland
Primary Care Coalition
Progressive Maryland
Protecting Immigrant Families Coalition
Public Justice Center
Resources for Immigrant Support and Empowerment (RISE) Immigrant Justice Coalition of Western MD
SEIU Local 500
Sierra Club Maryland Chapter
St. Camillus Church
Sunrise Rockville
SURJ Baltimore

Takoma Park Mobilization, Equal Justice
The Arc Maryland
UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO
The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland
UndocuBlack Network
UNITE HERE Local 25
United We Dream
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 400
Village Liberty Project