



Maryland  
Hospital Association

March 11, 2021

To: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair, House Health & Government Operations Committee

Re: Letter of Information- House Bill 534- Commission on Universal Health Care

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 534.

Broad based, affordable and comprehensive health insurance is integral to hospitals' ability to provide high-quality care. It also is key to the state's success under the Total Cost of Care Model, which pushes accountability for whole-person care, including population health. Maryland hospitals have been strong proponents of the state's efforts to expand health care coverage, supporting Medicaid expansion, offering subsidized individual and small group health plans through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange, and the creation of the individual market reinsurance program.

We therefore appreciate the General Assembly's leadership and commitment to ensuring Marylanders have coverage and access to health care services and look forward to continuing to work together to achieve this shared goal.

As a country and state, we have made major progress toward achieving universal coverage. The Affordable Care Act expanded insurance coverage to approximately 400,000 people across the state.<sup>1</sup> In its first year, the Maryland Easy Enrollment Health Insurance Program resulted in 4,000 individuals signing up for health coverage through the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.<sup>2</sup> Several proposals in front of the General Assembly this session would expand access to coverage, including an additional state-level subsidy for young adult individuals purchasing coverage from the exchange.

Over the past several years, the Maryland Health Insurance Coverage Protection Commission has led initiatives to continue coverage expansion in the state. These initiatives, in which hospitals are active partners, would strengthen the insurance marketplace and explore additional ways to transform the health care coverage system in the state. Given this progress, large-scale disruption to the state's health care coverage and delivery systems could be detrimental to the ultimate goal of ensuring insurance coverage for all Marylanders.

---

<sup>1</sup> Maryland Health Benefit Exchange. (November, 2020). "[Annual Report 2020.](#)"

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Maryland's hospitals know firsthand the importance of broad-based, continuous coverage and how critical it is for the success of the model. Under the model, our hospitals have lowered health care spending, while improving quality of care.

These improvements were only realized because of the synergies between our unique care delivery model and the expansion of health coverage.

Therefore, as you consider legislation, we encourage you to evaluate its impact on the Total Cost of Care Model and the coverage initiatives already in place or set to begin in the state. Any significant disruption to the health care landscape, or additional costs for the health care system, actually increase the risk that these initiatives will fail. We urge the state to be continuously mindful of its approach to maintain and increase access to health care coverage—the very foundation of our unique and respected health care delivery model.

For more information, please contact:  
Maansi Raswant, Vice President, Policy  
Mraswant@mhaonline.org