



## Unitarian Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### **SUPPORT FOR HB 1002 UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE – REVISIONS AND REQUIRED STUDY**

To: Delegate Dereck E. Davis and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee

From: Betty McGarvey Crowley and Christine Hager, Ph.D Co-Chairs, Health Task Force, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Date: February 23, 2021

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) is an advocacy organization with members in 23 UU congregations throughout the state. Since its founding in 2005, health care issues have been a priority and we are a member of the Health Care for All Coalition. Part of the provisions of this legislation is a policy we began supporting as a priority issue in 2020.

UULM-MD supports creating ways to help people enroll in health insurance in the easiest ways possible, and HB 1002 would help people applying for unemployment insurance get connected with healthcare coverage through the Maryland Health Exchange. This coverage is particularly important now.

Section 8-109(B)(1)-(4) on page 4 of the bill addresses our priority concern. “THE DEPARTMENT SHALL BEGIN IMPLEMENTING A SYSTEM THROUGH WHICH AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS FILED A CLAIM FOR BENEFITS MAY CONSENT, AS PART OF ANY WEEKLY CLAIM CERTIFICATION, TO THE SHARING OF RELEVANT COLLECTED INFORMATION BY THE DEPARTMENT WITH THE MARYLAND HEALTH BENEFIT EXCHANGE AND THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE INDIVIDUAL QUALIFIES FOR FREE OR LOW-COST HEALTH INSURANCE AND, IF SO, TO HELP THE INDIVIDUAL ENROLL.” As you consider the passage of HB 1002 we ask you to support these provisions.

It’s heartbreaking to read about the enormous increase in people filing for unemployment during the pandemic. So many Marylanders are now struggling to pay for the basics of life. Many of the newly unemployed have also lost their work-based health insurance, adding new stress and uncertainty to their lives.

We should do everything we can to make it easier for the unemployed to sign up for health insurance – to give them some security and make sure everyone has access to affordable health care in this public health crisis.

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We have read the report submitted by the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative done by Opinion Works which clearly shows support for the provision on page 4 of HB 1002 allowing people who are signing up for unemployment insurance to also start the process of enrolling in health insurance through the state's insurance exchange.

This would make it easier for people to learn about their insurance options. UULM-MD supports this easy idea to help those who are facing dire financial situations.

Thank you for considering our request for a favorable report.

Betty McGarvie Crowley and Christine Hager, Ph.D., Co-Chairs, Health Task Force

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