



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of SB 778: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Children and Pregnant Women (Healthy Babies Equity Act)

To: Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair, and Members of the Finance Committee
From: Jim Caldiero, Lead Advocate, Immigration,
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Date: March 8, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony **in support** of SB778, Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Children and Pregnant Women (Healthy Babies Equity Act). I encourage you to vote in favor of this bill as access to affordable health care, particularly during the current pandemic, and for those most vulnerable members of our community – babies -- is a right not to be denied because of immigration status.

Our undocumented immigrant neighbors make significant contributions to the economy by paying income taxes, Social Security and Medicare FICA contributions and working in essential jobs, particularly during the pandemic. However, they are currently ineligible for Medicaid due to their immigration status, making them—and their families—susceptible to illnesses and diseases that threaten our public safety if left untreated. We can begin to correct this inequity by ensuring that pre-natal and post-partum care are available to undocumented immigrant families and the most vulnerable members of families -- babies.

Studies show that the majority of pregnancy-related deaths are preventable. Seventeen states, including neighboring Virginia, provide coverage to pregnant people regardless of immigration status through Medicaid or another state program.

In Maryland, 7% of babies without care are three times more likely to have birth complications.

I share my faith with more than 4000 Unitarian Universalists in Maryland who are called to promote and affirm justice, equity and compassion in human relations and the inherent worth and dignity of every person – including babies, regardless of immigration status. Preserving and protecting the lives of children is the responsible, moral thing to do. Every person deserves lifesaving care regardless of immigration status. As such, I

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urge you to provide equitable access to health care for all Marylanders, including our immigrant neighbors by voting in favor of SB778.

Thank you.

Sources:

The American Academy of Pediatrics,

<https://healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/Caring-and-Advocating-for-Immigrant-Children-and-Families.aspx>

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