



**SB 778 - SUPPORT**

John Payne - Liaison

Sanctuary DMV

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**Medical Assistance Program - Children and Pregnant Women**

**Healthy Babies Equity Act**

Senate Finance Committee

March 7, 2022

Dear Chair Kelly and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is John Payne and I am a core organizer with Sanctuary DMV. We are an all-volunteer organization which works with immigrants and immigrant communities throughout Maryland, Virginia, and DC, and I am here today to express our support on behalf for SB 728. Sanctuary DMV's work is dedicated to helping immigrants and immigrant communities build power, standing with individuals and their families during immigration proceedings, and advocating for legislation that ensures immigrants are treated justly and with the respect they deserve.

Our current Medicaid system is one of the most important programs for helping new parents and their children. Numerous studies have shown that the first three years are the most important in a child's life and that the more prenatal and postpartum care they receive the healthier they will be in the rest of their life. These early years are also crucial for the parents's health as well, especially when dealing with the dangerous and potentially deadly health complications that arise from giving birth. Additionally, the first several years of a child's life can be extremely stressful, as any parent will always tell you, and this period can put the health of parents and caregivers at risk. All of the reasons combine to show just how important it is that that every resident has access to quality medical care why Medicaid is such an important program to our communities.

However, we know that our Medicaid system is not perfect and has excluded some of our most vulnerable neighbors. Currently, our undocumented neighbors are barred from access to Medicaid's critical services. This cruel and unjust exclusion denies them one of the most fundamental human rights, the right to quality health care. Instead of every member of community has the care they deserve at this critical and vulnerable time, this system forces them to get little to no medical assistance. Sanctuary DMV believes health care is a human right and no one should be denied any form of medical treatment, especially due to their status. We have worked with and stood with many families struggling from financial hardship who could barely afford rent, utility, and groceries, let alone the necessary care that pregnancy, birth, and raising a child require. These financial struggles have only increased over the past few years as the global pandemic has cut into family savings, deprived individuals of steady jobs, and created large scale economic uncertainty for entire communities.

Thankfully, the Healthy Baby Equity Act, is a chance to elevate some of this suffering and right this injustice. By making sure that all families are cared for regardless of their status, we are fulfilling our collective responsibility to help and support each and every neighbor,



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especially when it comes to raising children. We know those kids will and are be our community's future and we must take care of them and their parents during these ever so important time in their lives.

Sanctuary DMV urges a favorable report on SB 778.