



*Mission: To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy Vision: Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

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**SB778 Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Children and Pregnant Women (Healthy Babies Equity Act)**

**Hearing Date: 3/8/22**

**Committee: Finance**

**Position: Favorable**

Chairperson Kelley and members of the Finance Committee: The Maryland Public Health Association (MdpHA) would like to offer favorable testimony regarding SB 778, a bill to **expand eligibility for prenatal care through Medicaid to all pregnant people, regardless of status**. This change in eligibility would require the state to submit a state innovation waiver (under 1115 of the Social Security Act) to allow Maryland to make this change to eligibility. It would cover care through pregnancy and twelve months postpartum for both mother and child.

In Maryland, over 275K undocumented immigrants are ineligible for care through the Maryland Health Exchange. Multiple states have established comprehensive care programs to extend coverage to immigrants regardless of their immigration status. This has had the highest impact on Black and Latino residents, who have become sicker, hospitalized at higher rates, and die younger as they are forced to face life or death situations due to their exclusion in programs such as the Affordable Care Act.

There are currently seventeen states that have expanded and now provide prenatal care to undocumented pregnant immigrant people. **In Maryland, 6% of births were to people who had received late or no prenatal care in 2020**. Prenatal and postpartum care are transformative, especially in communities of color, in preserving the protecting the lives of children and their mothers. By joining the seventeen states across the nation and expanding Medicaid to pregnant people regardless of immigration status, we would be investing in the health of mothers and the future of Maryland. We urge a favorable report for SB778.

*The Maryland Public Health Association (MdpHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdpHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*