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MAYOR

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**SB59**

February 1, 2023

**TO:** Members of the Finance Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** Senate Bill 0059 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Employers Special Enrollment Period and Marketing

**POSITION: Support With Amendment**

Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with amendment** Senate Bill 0059.

SB 59 will create a special enrollment period on the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (HBE) for individuals employed by small employers (50 persons or less) that do not offer employer-sponsored health plans to employees and their dependents. This special enrollment period will provide these employees the opportunity to purchase private health insurance or enroll in Medicaid on the Exchange. This access to private health insurance during the enrollment period as well as the possibility of Medicaid enrollees transitioning to private insurance plans may offset increases in Medicaid enrollment and visits to local health departments.

In 2018, Baltimore City had just over 17,000 small businesses with 50 employees or less. Better health outcomes are strongly related to insurance coverage<sup>1</sup>. Increasing access to health insurance for employees of small businesses would be a great gain for the city of Baltimore and the health of its residents. In that respect, we request the committee to consider extending the deadline from 30 days to 60 days to allow for a longer enrollment period.

With above suggested amendment, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable with amendment** report on SB59. This bill is an innovative way to increase access to health care insurance for employees of small companies. :

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/chdir/2011/factsheets/insurance.pdf>