



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF **SENATE BILL 59**

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Employers – Special Enrollment Period and Marketing

Before the Senate Finance Committee

February 1, 2023

Chair Griffith and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name Ricarra Jones and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East. We are the largest healthcare workers union in the nation, representing over 10,000 members in Maryland & Washington DC alone. Our union supports SB59 to help small employers and their employees get connected with health coverage. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

This bill would invest \$5 million/year into a five-year outreach program to help small employers and their employees get connected with health coverage. This outreach would include education and training regarding existing coverage options, including enrolling in coverage through Maryland Health Connection, the state's online insurance marketplace, as well as options for employer-sponsored plans both on- and off- exchange.

1199 SEIU members in hospitals and clinics know how important insurance coverage is for patients. A marketing and outreach program would both help to reduce the overall uninsured rate in the state and support Maryland's small employers by ensuring that their employees have the coverage they need to remain healthy and productive.

With a severe staffing crisis across industries including healthcare, providing health coverage to small businesses helps with employee retention and recruitment which is especially important in the current economic climate.

Lastly, increasing access to healthcare coverage to small businesses and non-profits is an equity issue. Small businesses are more likely than large businesses to be owned by people of color and Maryland has the highest rate per-capita of businesses owned by people of color in the nation. Providing better opportunities for small businesses and nonprofits to help their employees connect with health coverage will improve health equity.

We urge a favorable report for SB 59.

In unity,

Ricarra Jones, Political Director

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