



HB0015 - Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs – Established

Presented to the Honorable Maggie McIntosh and Members of the House Appropriations Committee
January 27, 2021 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges House Appropriations Committee to issue **a favorable report on HB0015 - Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs - Established**, sponsored by Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. In order to lead healthy lives and parent their children with autonomy and dignity, immigrants to the United States require specialized community-based resources that provide guidance on a path to naturalization and fiscal sufficiency.

Immigrants comprise nearly 15% of Maryland's population (a number that is growing each year)¹ and are disproportionately underinsured or uninsured. Unauthorized immigrants do not qualify for coverage options offered by Medicaid, CHIP, or the ACA Marketplace, while authorized immigrants qualify but may face significant restrictions in eligibility. Although immigrants can obtain coverage through their employers, many are low-income and tend to be employed in industries that do not offer employee-sponsored coverage. Without access to a living wage and healthcare coverage, immigrant communities face significant barriers in obtaining the healthcare that they need². Further, the effects of deportation have a lasting impact on immigrant families, inducing trauma upon families and preventing individuals from parenting their children with dignity³.

Maryland can better address the needs of its immigrant communities by establishing the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, which will create a network of community-based centers that provide immigrant services. These services will increase access to ESOL programs, assist immigrants with the naturalization process, connect immigrants to workforce development programs, and reduce the exploitation of immigrants.

We support this effort because it will increase access to essential healthcare services and reduce health disparities for immigrant communities. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB0015**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ "Immigrants in Maryland." Immigrants in Maryland Fact Sheet. American Immigration Council, August 6, 2020.

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-maryland>

² Published: Mar 18, 2020. Health Coverage of Immigrants. Kaiser Family Foundation, March 18, 2020. <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-of-immigrants/>

³ Chabra, Divya, Lisa Fortuna, and Pamela Montana. "Stress & Trauma Toolkit." Stress and Trauma Toolkit. American Psychiatry Association. Accessed January 22, 2021. <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/cultural-competency/education/stress-and-trauma/undocumented-immigrants>