



**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**Legislators and advocates to hold news conference highlighting the urgent need for legislation to help smaller employers provide health insurance to workers**  
*Legislation Would Significantly Bring Down Health Insurance Costs for Small Businesses and Non-Profits*

**WHAT:** News conference to highlight legislation (SB632/HB709) creating subsidy fund for small business health insurance

**WHO:** Sen. Katie Fry Hester and Del. Robbyn Lewis, lead sponsors  
Senator Brian Feldman, Del. Brooke Lierman, Del. Karen Lewis Young, co-sponsors  
Howard County Executive Calvin Ball  
Rick Weldon, Maryland Association of Local Chamber of Commerce Executives  
Willie Flowers, President, NAACP Maryland State Conference  
Vincent DeMarco, Maryland Health Care for All! Coalition

**WHEN:** Wednesday, March 2, 2022, 12:15 p.m.

**WHERE:** Miller Senate Office Building, Media Room, 11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401  
Livestream will be available at <https://www.facebook.com/mdhealthcareforall>

Key senators and delegates, along with a representative of a statewide business group, will join the Maryland Health Care for All! Coalition, to highlight the urgency of passing SB632/HB709, which would establish a state fund to provide subsidies to small businesses and non-profits to bring down the cost of providing health insurance for their employees. Under the bill, up to \$45 million of available federal funds would be leveraged toward subsidies annually, with another \$3 million provided for outreach measures to promote the program each year. Maryland Health Benefit Exchange would establish eligibility for the program.

The bill seeks to utilize available federal funding to pay for the program.

The Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing on the bill at 1 p.m., immediately following the news conference.

“Small businesses, non-profits, and their employees have been hit especially hard during this pandemic, and we need to provide support for them to access high-quality, affordable health insurance,” said Sen. Katie Fry Hester (D-Howard and Carroll), lead Senate sponsor. “This legislation

will be a lifeline to these small employers who want to do the right thing and provide benefits for their employees, but who struggle to manage the sheer cost.”

“Maryland’s small employers are the bedrock of our state economy and it’s important to support them as we grow our way out of the pandemic downturn,” said Del. Robbyn Lewis (D-Baltimore City), the lead House sponsor. “We want all workers in the state to have access to affordable health insurance, and this bill will be a major step forward in achieving that goal.”

The State of Maryland has taken several steps to expand access to affordable health insurance. In 2021, it established a new subsidy program to bring down the cost of premiums for young adults, a demographic group that has traditionally had higher rates of being uninsured.

“Howard County is home to more than 10,000 small businesses, and this vital piece of legislation will help them provide the much-needed health benefits for their employees,” said Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. “After nearly two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that we must provide and care for our most vulnerable populations who cannot afford to miss out on available opportunities. I’m grateful for Senator Katie Fry Hester and Delegate Robbyn Lewis for sponsoring this important measure. Joining my fellow County Executives and Baltimore City Mayor, we know this legislation will provide assistance to our workforce who need it most.”

“The local Chamber of Commerce executives strongly support this legislation to help our small businesses,” said Rick Weldon, of the Maryland Association of Local Chamber of Commerce Executives. “Costs are going up and many businesses are feeling the pinch. This measure would give them the support they need to provide better benefits to their workers, and that’s a win-win for them, their workers and the state.”

“Maryland has been a leader in finding ways to invest in expanding access to health insurance, and our state is healthier because of those steps,” said Sen. Brian Feldman (D-Montgomery), a cosponsor of the legislation. “This small business subsidy program will be a particularly effective way of getting more people enrolled in health insurance.”

“Health insurance is vital to all Marylanders, and we should do whatever we can to encourage people to sign up for affordable coverage. This bill will expand access to coverage for many small business employees, and I urge the General Assembly to move quickly to pass it,” said Del. Brooke Lierman (D-Baltimore City), a House cosponsor. “By supporting small business, we are accelerating the economic recovery and also making sure more Marylanders can lead healthy lives.”

“It’s in the state’s best interest to invest in getting more people signed up for health insurance,” said Del. Karen Lewis Young (D-Frederick), a cosponsor. “With more people signed up for coverage, we bring down costs for unnecessary emergency room visits for people without insurance. That brings down the costs to our health system and that means lower insurance premiums for everybody.”

“The support for workers and small businesses should have always been one and the same in regard to health coverage for families,” said Willie Flowers, president of the NAACP Maryland State Conference. “I don’t know how that was missed in the beginning of this advocacy but I am happy to

see that this bill addresses coverage for worker families and addresses the burden to small business owners.”

“This is a great bill that will provide major benefits to small businesses and their employees,” said Vincent DeMarco, president of the Maryland Health Care for All! Coalition, the lead group advocating for the measure. “Maryland has made strong progress on bringing down the number of people who are uninsured, but there is more work to do. This piece of legislation will advance that goal significantly.”

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