



Testimony Presented to the Senate Health Policy Committee

Gilda Z. Jacobs, President and CEO

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Good afternoon, Chairman Shirkey and members of the Committee. I am Gilda Jacobs, President and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. The League has been advocating for low-income families and children in Michigan for more than 100 years, and I am pleased today to have the opportunity to present our comments about SB 542. We strongly oppose this bill and any efforts to hinder the Department of Health and Human Services' ability to reach out to potentially eligible clients to educate and encourage them to enroll in the healthcare coverage for which they are eligible.

The Healthy Michigan Plan should be available to all of those who qualify. This is a particularly critical issue in view of the Flint water crisis and the increase in Legionnaires' Disease in Genesee County, resulting in three deaths. It is imperative that the people of Flint receive the care and services they require to overcome this crisis—now and in the long term. The Department should instead be instructed to reach out to Flint residents and to make enrollment in the Healthy Michigan Plan as swift and easy as possible so that they can receive their initial exams quickly and identify potential health risks and pursue needed treatment.

The fact that so many more individuals than initially projected qualify for the Healthy Michigan Plan demonstrates the unequal economic recovery in Michigan. Nearly 1 in 6 Michigan residents, and 1 in 4 children, live below the poverty level (\$24,000 a year for a family of four).

In addition, we know that there are some individuals, particularly those who work for low-wage employers or are part-time, who will never have the opportunity to be covered by employer-sponsored insurance because their employers will never be able to offer it. If those individuals do not earn more than 133% of the federal poverty level (\$15,521 for an individual, \$31,721 family of 4), they will only be eligible for the Healthy Michigan Plan, as they do not qualify to purchase subsidized coverage through the Federal Marketplace.

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The Healthy Michigan Plan has been a resounding success, currently covering about 600,000 individuals.

We should be celebrating that so many of our formerly uninsured or underinsured residents now have comprehensive coverage through the Healthy Michigan Plan. The economic impact on the state has also been remarkable with the billions of new federal dollars coming into the state and generating economic activity.

This bill does not represent good public policy and should not be adopted.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee.