\*\*Please email testimony to Suzanne Curry at scurry@hcfama.org by Monday, July 19th at noon.\*\*

INSERT LETTERHEAD HERE

July 20, 2021

The Honorable John Lawn, Chair The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Chair

Joint Committee on Health Care Financing Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

State House, Room 445 State House, Room 208

Boston, MA 02133 Boston, MA 02133

Submitted by email

**Re: H. 1309/S. 762, *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children***

**H.1310/S.763, *An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities***

Dear Chairs Lawn and Friedman,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children* (H.1309/S.762) and *An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities* (H.1310/S.763). These bills would help advance the Commonwealth’s goals of promoting health equity and moving towards universal coverage for children.

[*Describe your organization/affiliation, and/or role and a general statement about your connection to the issue – why these bills are important to you/your organization.*]

Massachusetts is a leader in access to health care for children; however, significant gaps and inequities remain. Over 30,000 children and young adults, including an estimated 1,650 young people with disabilities, do not have access to comprehensive coverage simply because of their immigration status. Many immigrant children can only access care through safety net programs, such as the Children’s Medical Security Plan, Health Safety Net, and/or MassHealth Limited. Each of these programs has strict limits on covered benefits or provider types, and does not provide the comprehensive coverage that children need. These bills would ensure that otherwise eligible children and young adults are not excluded from comprehensive MassHealth coverage simply because of their immigration status.

[*Include stories about patients/clients/members you serve, if applicable. For example: I provide care for brothers, ages 9 and 7, who have many health care needs. The 9 year old is paraplegic due to spina bifida and needs a new wheelchair, which is not covered by CMSP. The 7 year old was diagnosed with an adjustment disorder, which causes significant behavior issues at school. Emergency services teams recommended intensive therapy, including in-home therapy, which is not covered by CMSP. Despite transportation and other barriers, the 7 year old was able to start outpatient therapy, but CMSP has caps on the number of covered visits and this type of therapy alone will not provide the level of support he needs.]*

Inadequate health coverage puts additional stress on families who already experience barriers to linguistically and culturally appropriate care, and may face discrimination, trauma, and socioeconomic hardship. Immigrant families have also been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Inadequate coverage results in increased health system costs through emergency room visits, longer inpatient hospital stays, or more acute, intensive interventions, which in many instances, could be avoided with more inclusive coverage.

*An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities* (H.1310/S.763) would expand the comprehensive MassHealth program, CommonHealth, tochildrenand low-income young adults with disabilities whose only barrier to accessing this coverage is immigration status. Covering the highest needs children and young adults is an important step towards the ultimate goal of expanding MassHealth to all otherwise eligible children regardless of immigration status, as proposed in *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children* (H.1309/S.762). California, Washington, Oregon, Illinois, New York, and Washington D.C. offer Medicaid coverage to income-eligible children regardless of immigration status. The Connecticut legislature recently passed a similar bill. It is time for Massachusetts to cover all kids.

*[I/We]* respectfully ask you to support and favorably report both *An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children* (H.1309/S.762) and *An Act to ensure equitable access to health coverage for children with disabilities* (H.1310/S.763) from your committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me at *[insert email and/or phone contact information]* or Suzanne Curry from Health Care For All at scurry@hcfama.org with questions or to discuss this issue further. Thank you.

Sincerely,

*[NAME]*

*[TITLE – if applicable]*

*[ORGANIZATION/AFFILIATION – if applicable]*

Cc: Members, Joint Committee on Health Care Financing