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TO: The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Jim Rosapepe

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 28, 2018

RE: **SUPPORT**– Senate Bill 858 – *Health Insurance – Access to Local Health Departments*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, we submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 858, which expands the network adequacy standards by requiring insurers to include local health departments in their network.

Local health departments provide a wide-variety of health programs tailored to community needs. These programs include preventive care; immunizations; health education; drug and alcohol abuse counseling; rabies and communicable disease prevention and many others. Expanding access to them by ensuring that they are included in a carrier's network will ultimately increase access to care, including improving access to behavioral health services.

This increased access is particularly important in medically underserved areas where access to services, particularly behavioral health services is challenging. Recently adopted network adequacy standards recognize that access to medically necessary services can be negatively impacted if a carrier's network fails to include sufficient providers within a reasonable time and distance. During the deliberations on those network adequacy requirements, carriers often spoke to the challenges they faced in contracting with providers to meet those standards, especially behavioral health providers.

Passage of Senate Bill 858 will enable local health departments to work in partnership with other community-based and private practice providers to increase access to care and thereby improve health outcomes. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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