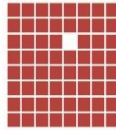




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Maryland Chapter  
AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
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Maryland Chapter

TO: The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chair  
Members, Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Katherine Klausmeier

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

DATE: March 8, 2017

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 967 – *Heroin and Opioid Prevention Effort (HOPE) and Treatment Act of 2017*

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The Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers, and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics submit this letter of **support** for Senate Bill 967, **with amendment**.

Senate Bill 967 proposes a number of notable initiatives some of which are also reflected in separate legislative initiatives. However, considered in concert, they provide a comprehensive framework for addressing Maryland's escalating substance abuse, addiction, and overdose crisis. Included in Senate Bill 967 are:

- Requirements for higher education institutions that award degrees for licensure of health care providers to offer courses related to substance use disorders and pain management;
- Establishment of at least 10 crisis treatment centers across the state that are available 24/7 to address the immediate needs of individuals experiencing a substance disorder crisis;
- Development of a toll-free health crisis hotline that is available 24/7 to assist callers with the identification of appropriate resources to address substance use and mental health disorders;
- Provisions for ensuring there is access through health care facilities to health care providers who can provide the full range of opioid addiction medications including buprenorphine prescribers;
- Enhanced reimbursement provisions of community behavioral health providers (“Keep the Door Open”);
- Requirements for hospital discharge protocols to include coordination with peer review counselors for SBIRT and provision of naloxone;
- Clarification that coverage for behavioral health services by insurers is in conformance with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act and includes coverage in residential treatment centers and outpatient and intensive outpatient benefits;
- A requirement for the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a plan for regional recovery schools; and
- A requirement of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and stakeholders to develop a plan to increase

substance abuse treatment in State prisons and local jails.

It should be noted that the provisions of the bill associated with access to providers who prescribe buprenorphine as introduced were unacceptable to the affected facilities and providers. However, amendments have been offered by the sponsor that removed the initial objections and reflect the requested amendments noted in the position on the legislation.

While the named organizations recognize that the initiatives reflected in Senate Bill 967 will require a significant commitment of State resources, those resources are necessary if Maryland is to effectively address the current crisis and stem the escalating incidences of addiction, overdose, and death associated with heroin, opioids, and other illicit substances. A favorable report with the noted amendments is requested.

**For more information call:**

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