

TO: The Honorable Peter A. Hammen, Chairman
Members, House Health & Government Operations Committee
The Honorable James Hubbard

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise

DATE: February 23, 2010

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 862 – *Statewide
Advisory Commission on Immunizations – Membership and Sunset Repeal*

On behalf of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society, and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, we support House Bill 862 with amendment.

House Bill 862 is similar to House Bill 411 and House Bill 532, previously heard by the Committee. These bills address the sunset of the Statewide Advisory Commission on Immunizations which was first created in 2002 to address a number of important issues regarding immunizations, their administration, distribution and financing. The Commission membership includes representatives from various stakeholder organizations that have expertise or involvement with immunizations including health professionals, consumer advocacy organizations, local health departments, school system representatives, insurers and manufacturers. It has been utilized by the legislature to address a number of immunization issues over the last several years.

Unlike the two previous bills heard by the Committee, MedChi and MDAAP believe that House Bill 862 reflects the critical changes necessary to make this Commission both permanent and more effective in meeting its charges. The legislation removes the sunset; changes the Chair appointment from MedChi to the Secretary of DHMH; provides for a term for the Commission members; clarifies that the Commission's charge with respect to school vaccines is not only in times of shortage; and clarifies that the public education component of the Commission's charge applies when there are public health emergencies that involve vaccines such as the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine issues this year. MedChi and MDAAP believe these proposed changes will ensure that the Commission has a vibrant membership, the leadership of the Commission reflects the best candidate possible and that the work of the Commission will continue uninterrupted by concerns of sunset.

The Honorable Peter A. Hammen, Chairman
House Bill 862
Page Two

The only additional amendment MedChi and MDAAP would offer with regard to House Bill 862 is the addition of the word “adolescent” in the charges of the Commission that now identify adult and childhood vaccines (see page 4, lines 4-8). They believe the addition of “adolescent” to these charges will enable the Commission to address the concerns that lead to the introduction of the HPV vaccine language in House Bill 411 and other issues that may arise with respect to vaccines for adolescents.

In summary, MedChi and MDAAP believe the continuation of this Commission and its work is vital to the public health of the citizens of this State. Furthermore, they request that House Bill 862, with the requested addition of “adolescent” to the relevant charge language, be the vehicle the Committee uses to advance this objective. As discussed above, the changes reflected in House Bill 862 strengthen the Commission and make it a permanent resource to the Department and policy makers.

For more information call:

Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
(410) 269 - 1618