

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Sheila Hixson, Chairman
Members, House Ways & Means Committee
The Honorable Peter A. Hammen, Chairman
Members, House Health & Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Dereck Davis

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

DATE: March 2, 2011

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1 – *Education – Youth Athletes – Concussions*
SUPPORT – House Bill 858 – *Education – Student Athletes - Concussions*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, support House Bills 1 and 858 which both seek to provide a program of education, return to play restrictions and other requirements designed to decrease the likelihood of significant injury or death of student athletes that often result from concussion and other head injuries. MedChi prefers, however, the provisions of House Bill 858.

Concussions are one of the most commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and recreational activities. A concussion is a type of brain injury that may range from mild to severe and may temporarily or permanently disrupt normal brain activity. While a concussion may occur with or without loss of consciousness, the vast majority occur without a loss of consciousness. A student athlete who continues to play with a concussion or symptoms of head injury is especially vulnerable to greater injury or even death.

Both House Bill 1 and House Bill 858 require the Department of Education, in consultation with various stakeholders, to develop and implement a program to provide awareness and training to coaches, school personnel, student athletes and their parents about the nature and risk of concussion, the criteria for return-to-play and the risks of not reporting an injury and continuing to play. MedChi supports the broader list of stakeholders included in House Bill 858.

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It is MedChi's understanding that Delegate Davis's commitment to enhanced advocacy regarding concussions emanates from his role as a coach in his son's youth sports program. MedChi wishes to acknowledge his astute observation of current playing environments that may not adequately protect the health and safety our youth. While the detailed provisions of House Bill 858 are preferable to that of House Bill 1, both bills have the same objectives – better awareness of concussions and the potential health consequences associated with failure to properly manage them when they occur and an enhanced focus on increasing the safety of our youth athletics programs. We applaud both sponsors for their commitment to those objectives.

In large measure, the language of House Bill 858 reflects the continued stakeholder discussions that continued during the 2010 interim following the failure of similar legislation in 2010. It is MedChi's understanding that both sponsors are working collaboratively to advance legislation that this Committee finds appropriate. MedChi urges a favorable passage of this legislative initiative.

For more information call:

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