

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Brian E. Frosh, Chairman
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Jennie Forehand

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

DATE: March 10, 2011

RE: **SUPPORTS** – Senate Bill 499 – *Motor Vehicles – Required Seat Belt Use by Each Occupant*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 499.

Senate Bill 499 provides a simple yet important enhancement to Maryland's existing seat belt use requirements. It requires all occupants in a vehicle, regardless of age, to wear their seatbelts regardless of where they are sitting in the vehicle. Current law only requires persons under the age of 16 to be restrained by a seat belt in all seats of a vehicle. Persons older than 16 are only required to wear a seatbelt if they are in the front seat of a vehicle. Further, the legislation specifies the minimum number of seatbelts that must be present in the front and rear seats of a vehicle and eliminates an existing exemption for children if the vehicle has fewer seatbelts than that needed for the number of persons to be transported. The bill prohibits a person with a provisional license from operating a vehicle if everyone is not wearing seatbelts. The legislation does retain the ability of a physician to order that the use of a seatbelt should not apply to accommodate those whose physical condition makes wearing a seatbelt of greater risk than not.

It has been well documented that seat belt use has saved thousands of lives and reduced the morbidity and mortality that results from motor vehicle accidents. There is no justification for failing to require seat belt use by all passengers. Passengers are not in control of the vehicle in which they ride and should be required to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves from the actions of their driver and those on the road around them. It is a prudent and justified enhancement of our current law.

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