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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 16, 2012

RE: **OPPOSE** – House Bill 561 – *Pharmacists – Administration of Vaccines – Expanded Authority*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, opposes House Bill 561.

House Bill 561 expands the authority of pharmacists to administer vaccines. It will permit a pharmacist to administer all CDC recommended vaccines to all individuals who are at least 9 years of age. Much of the dialogue surrounding health system reform has focused on the need to establish a “medical home” for each individual and the benefit of providing comprehensive primary care as well as the coordination of other medical services through the primary care physician serving as that medical home. House Bill 561 will move the delivery system in the opposite direction and will result in further fragmentation of primary care services.

In addition, passage of House Bill 561 potentially jeopardizes the health and well-being of those individuals, particularly the children. Pharmacies are not equipped to respond to adverse reactions to vaccines and children’s sensitivities to various substances may not be known at the time of vaccination. Furthermore, a pharmacist would not beware of underlying medical conditions such as asthma that may contraindicate the provision of a particular type of vaccine. Under current law, except for the flu vaccine, a pharmacist can only administer limited vaccines to adults and only if there is a prescription from a physician. Current law also requires the pharmacist to inform the patient’s physician that the immunization has been administered. None of those patient protections are reflected in the proposed expansion of authority.

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There is no indication that Maryland's children lack adequate access to immunizations through pediatricians. We should be encouraging parents to establish a relationship with a pediatrician for the provision of comprehensive primary care services including vaccines. We should not be encouraging the development of a delivery system that encourages parents to access health care services in a piecemeal, uncoordinated manner. MedChi urges an unfavorable report.

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