

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

1211 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516
410.539.0872
Fax: 410.547.0915

1.800.492.1056

www.medchi.org

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

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

DATE: March 20, 2012

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1407 – *Department of Health and Mental Hygiene –
Workgroup on Cancer Clusters and Environmental Causes of Cancer*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,600 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports House Bill 1407.

House Bill 1407 requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), in consultation with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), to convene a workgroup of relevant stakeholders to specifically examine issues relative to potential cancer clusters in the State as well as the potential environmental causes of cancer. The bill delineates the specific charges of the workgroup which includes the State's process for indentifying and investigating cancer clusters; the communication between various State and Federal agencies regarding cancer clusters and their potential environmental causes; relevant research on these issues; and whether there is relevant and additional information that could and should be provided to the public regarding cancer clusters and environmental causes of cancer.

DHMH's Cancer Prevention, Education, Screening and Treatment Program currently coordinates the State's efforts with respect to reducing the morbidity and mortality rates for cancer in the State. There are multiple components to that program's efforts and the passage of House Bill 1407 would enhance the work of that program by specifically focusing on cancer clusters and environmental causes of cancer. In addition, DHMH produces a report, titled the Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, which includes possible

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environmental causes of certain cancers. Again, passage of House Bill 1407 will enhance DHMH's efforts to identify environmental causes of cancer and will specifically focus that information as it relates to potential cancer clusters.

Maryland has historically demonstrated high incidence rates for various types of cancer. House Bill 1407 will ensure that the State is sufficiently focused on how these increased incidence statistics may correlate with cancer clusters and/or indicate potential environmental factors or causes for the increased incidence rates. Further, the focus of House Bill 1407 is consistent with the effort by the Administration and public health professionals to address health disparities. Cancer clusters and environmental impacts that affect the rate of cancer are important aspects of tackling Maryland's multi-faceted health disparity challenges. MedChi believes the creation of the workgroup required by House Bill 1407 will focus resources in an appropriate direction and urges a favorable report.

For more information call:

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