

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Dereck E. Davis, Chairman
Members, House Economic Matters Committee
The Honorable Benjamin Kramer

FROM: Gene M. Ransom, CEO

DATE: March 7, 2013

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 1159 – *Electric Companies – Service Restoration – Prioritized Facilities*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,500 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports House Bill 1159 with amendment.

House Bill 1159 seeks to further the service quality and reliability goals as they relate to certain prioritized facilities as defined in the legislation. These facilities include assisted living, hospice, hospital and nursing home facilities. It also includes congregate housing programs and any other type of facility that the Secretary of DHMH designates as housing vulnerable residents. The Secretary of DHMH is required to provide a list of prioritized facilities to each electric company for its service territory by January 1st of each year. The electric company must post the name and address of these facilities on their website. Further the bill requires the electric company to provide to the PSC an annual performance report regarding outages to the designated priority facilities and actions taken to prevent future service disruptions.

Recent power outages throughout Maryland have caused interruptions in the provision of medical care due to building closures and have resulted in significant losses to physician practices due to the loss of expensive medications and vaccines. Many of the buildings in which physician offices are located do not have generators to restore power immediately. The extended loss of power prevents physicians from providing needed medical services and often results in the loss of vaccines and other pharmaceuticals which require refrigeration. Physician offices should receive priority designation under this legislation in concert with the other health care facilities defined in the legislation and requests the bill be amended accordingly.

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Ensuring that continued availability of medical services, especially during a catastrophic event that causes widespread power outages, should be a priority for the electrical companies. Such events often result in an increased demand for health care services. Further, the vulnerable populations identified in the legislation are least able to accommodate the challenges that arise when power fails. House Bill 1159 provides a structure and approach to assist in prioritizing restoration efforts to these facilities. With its amendment to add physician offices to the list of prioritized facilities, MedChi urges a favorable report.

For more information call:
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