

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Thomas Mac Middleton, Chairman
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable E.J. Pipkin

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

DATE: March 21, 2013

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 977 – *Task Force to Evaluate Regional Health Delivery and Health Planning in Rural Areas*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,500 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 977.

Senate Bill 977 establishes a Task Force to evaluate health delivery and health planning in rural areas. The rural areas of Maryland (Eastern Shore, Southern Maryland and Western Maryland) present particular challenges for health care delivery and planning. In certain portions of “rural areas” there are increasing population centers but, in most of Maryland’s rural areas, population is widely scattered.

Some things are clear with respect to health care delivery in rural areas. For example, the use of telemedicine will be of great value to patients in rural areas as specialists can be accessed in the urban academic medical centers without the necessity of travel to that center.

At the same time, there are accommodations that need to be made to address rural health needs. For example, legislation had to be passed to allow a free standing emergency room to be located in Queen Anne’s County without an attached hospital. Clearly, there was a need for such an ER given the summer traffic challenges in Queen Anne’s County in transporting patients to Anne Arundel County.

As hospital systems become more integrated (and bigger and larger), they need to be sufficiently attuned to the needs of the rural areas which they are now serving. MedChi believes that a Task Force to discuss all of these and the related issues is important and urges favorable consideration of Senate Bill 977.

For more information call:

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