

SCHWARTZ, METZ & WISE, P.A.

ATTORNEYS

20 WEST STREET
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TEL: 410-244-7000

FAX: 410-269-5443

TO: The Honorable Peter A. Hammen, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Ariana B. Kelly

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

DATE: February 24, 2015

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – House Bill 739 – *Task Force to Study Maternal Mental Health*

On behalf of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Maryland Section (MDACOG), and The Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers (MACHC), we support House Bill 739, with amendment.

House Bill 739 proposes to establish a Task Force to study issues relative to maternal mental health. Women who are pregnant, and up to 1 year after they give birth, are at an increased risk for mood and anxiety disorders. However, many women do not recognize the development of depression and other mood disorders and therefore perinatal mental health concerns often go undiagnosed and untreated. Failure to identify and address maternal mental health concerns place both the mother and child at risk. The Task Force proposed in House Bill 739 will provide a framework for focused attention on this issue with a report due on mechanisms to identify vulnerable populations and risk factors and recommendations on screening, identification and treatment strategies, as well as public education and awareness programs. The Task Force is in place for a short duration and to identify useful and effective strategies for addressing issues and challenges relative to maternal mental health.

There are, however, two suggested amendments to the composition of the Task Force. It would be important to include a representative of the Maryland Section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) on the Task Force. ACOG representation will provide the Task Force with meaningful expertise on the issue given their focus on women's health issues, particularly as they relate to pregnancy. ACOG is a national organization and the Maryland Section's representation would enable the Task Force to draw on ACOG's data, expertise and other Association resources garnered from similar or related efforts initiated in other States. Similarly, inclusion of a

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representative from the Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers would ensure that issues particular to women in low income and medically underserved areas are identified and incorporated into the Task Force deliberations. With the amendments noted, the above referenced organizations support House Bill 739.

For more information call:

Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
Joseph A. Schwartz, III
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
410-244-7000