

SCHWARTZ, METZ & WISE, P.A.

ATTORNEYS

20 WEST STREET
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TEL: 410-244-7000

FAX: 410-269-5443

TO: The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Brian J. Feldman

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

DATE: February 4, 2015

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 74 – *Task Force to Study Maternal Mental Health*

On behalf of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Maryland Section (MDACOG), and The Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers (MACHC), we support Senate Bill 74, with amendment.

Senate Bill 74 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 SB 74 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 is however two suggested amendments to the composition of the Task Force. It would be important to include a representative of the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (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 Chapter'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 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 SB 74.

For more information call:

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