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TO: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair  
Members, Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Arthur Ellis

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: January 26, 2021

RE: **OPPOSE** – Senate Bill 163 – *Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doulas*

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On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (MDACOG), we submit this letter of **opposition** for Senate Bill 163.

Senate Bill 163 proposes to require coverage of doula services under the Medicaid program subject to certain specific regulatory parameters. MedChi and MDACOG fully support the coverage of Doula services by Medicaid, as studies have demonstrated that having a doula present at births can in many circumstances improve outcomes. Doulas can be an important component of the birth team that all women should be able to access. While they support doula coverage under Medicaid to enhance access to doula services for low-income women, the provisions of the bill present a number of barriers and unintended consequences to achieving that objective.

Maryland currently lacks a regulatory structure for doulas and the bill does not provide a framework for the full range of issues relative to certification and reimbursement that will ensure the ability of appropriately trained doulas to provide services to Medicaid recipients. For example, the bill reflects only 4 programs of the more than 20 in existence. Maryland should create a regulatory structure for doula certification rather than identify 4 programs in statute. To enhance the provision of doula services and secure their access to reimbursement from Medicaid and other insurers, Maryland should undertake the development of a more comprehensive regulatory structure related to doulas and the services provided. For example, analogous to the process utilized when the State made a commitment to enhancing the recognition and utilization of community health workers.

MedChi and MDACOG strongly support enhancing access to and utilization of doula services and look forward to working with relevant stakeholders in achieving that objective but Senate Bill 163, as drafted, has numerous unintended implications and will undermine that objective. An unfavorable report is requested.

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