

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

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TO: The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chairman
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Wade Kach
The Honorable Adrienne Jones

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

DATE: April 6, 2010

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 435 – *Health Insurance – Reimbursement of Primary Care Providers – Bonus Payments*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports House Bill 435.

House Bill 435 requires health insurance companies to compensate physicians in accordance with a recommendation of the Governor’s Task Force on Health Care Access and Reimbursement which, in Recommendation No. 6, proposed that insurance carriers make elevated payments for after hours and weekend care. This recommendation resulted from the insight that paying doctors for after hour care would cut down on “inappropriate” use of emergency departments.

“Inappropriate use of emergency departments leads to misuse not only of scarce services but also scarce health care dollars. In 2006, the median emergency department expense, including facility and physician expense, was over 6 times greater than the office-based visit (\$72 vs. \$460).” (Governor’s Task Force Recommendation attached).

While most commercial payers in Maryland do not pay a premium for after hour visits, this practice is changing “...in response to the crisis of emergency department overcrowding and the Institute of Medicine’s focus on timely care as an essential pillar of quality care.” (Governor’s Task Force Recommendation No. 6)

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The CPT code, which is the bible for medical billing, recognizes this situation. Code 99050 recognizes services provided in the office at times other than regularly scheduled office hours or on days when the office is normally closed in addition to basic service.

MedChi would urge a favorable report on House Bill 435 which would make Maryland's legal requirements consistent with one action recommended by the Governor's Task Force on Health Care Access and Reimbursement (Governor's Task Force Recommendation No. 6 attached hereto). For a copy of the full report of the Task Force go to www.dhmf.state.md.us and click on reports.

For more information call:

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