

# MedChi

*The Maryland State Medical Society*

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TO: The Honorable Thomas Mac Middleton, Jr., Chairman  
Members, Senate Finance Committee

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

DATE: January 20, 2010

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 57 – *Health Insurance – Mental Health Benefits – Group Health Plans*

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The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 57.

Maryland enacted one of the nation's first mental health parity laws in 1996. The mental health advocacy community continued to advocate for a federal parity law that required all health plans to provide parity, not just insured plans. That sustained effort was successful in 2008 with the passage of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) was enacted.

The passage of federal legislation assures that self-funded ERISA plans as well as State regulated insured plans must provide parity with similar benefits for physical health if they provide mental health and addictions benefits. There are a number of changes in MHPAEA that require Maryland to amend its parity law to be in compliance with federal law. Reformation of Maryland's law to comply with the provisions of federal will expand access to mental health and addiction service benefits to many Marylanders and will enable the MIA to enforce the provisions of the statute. MedChi urges a favorable report.

**For more information call:**

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cc: Maryland Insurance Administration