

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Joan Carter Conway, Chairman
Members, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
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J. Steven Wise

DATE: March 9, 2011

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 771 – *Education – Student Athletes - Concussions*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, support Senate Bill 771 which seeks to provide a program of education, return to play restrictions and other requirements designed to decrease the likelihood of significant injury or death of student athletes that often result from concussion and other head injuries.

Concussions are one of the most commonly reported injuries in children and adolescents who participate in sports and recreational activities. A concussion is a type of brain injury that may range from mild to severe and may temporarily or permanently disrupt normal brain activity. While a concussion may occur with or without loss of consciousness, the vast majority occur without a loss of consciousness. A student athlete who continues to play with a concussion or symptoms of head injury is especially vulnerable to greater injury or even death.

Senate Bill 771 requires the Department of Education, in consultation with various stakeholders, to develop and implement a program to provide awareness and training to coaches, school personnel, student athletes and their parents about the nature and risk of concussion, the criteria for return-to-play and the risks of not reporting an injury and continuing to play.

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In large measure, the language of Senate Bill 771 reflects the continued stakeholder discussions that continued during the 2010 interim following the failure of similar legislation in 2010. The objectives of Senate Bill 771 are better awareness of concussions and the potential health consequences associated with failure to properly manage them when they occur and an enhanced focus on increasing the safety of our youth athletics programs. We applaud the sponsor for her commitment to those objectives.

MedChi urges a favorable passage of this legislative initiative.

For more information call:

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