

MedChi

The Maryland State Medical Society

1211 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516
410.539.0872
Fax: 410.547.0915

1.800.492.1056

www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Brian E. Frosh, Chairman
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Jamie Raskin

FROM: Gene M. Ransom, III
Executive Director

DATE: March 8, 2011

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 803 – *Drunk Driving Elimination Act*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,300 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 803.

Senate Bill 803 requires, rather than authorizes, the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to establish an Ignition Interlock System Program. The bill requires, rather than permits, participation from persons who have been convicted of specified alcohol-related driving offenses. A person who is required to participate in the program must successfully complete it or that person is subject to suspension of their driver's license. In large measure, Senate Bill 803 reflects the provisions of Senate Bill 564 of 2010 as it passed the Senate but died in the House.

The one additional provision included in Senate Bill 803 requires program participation for individuals whose license is subject to suspension for refusing to submit to a chemical, blood or breathalyzer test. After a 45 day suspension, that individual would be required to participate in the program for at least 1 year and successfully complete the program. This additional provision strengthens the already notable provisions of legislation that, if enacted, will dramatically reduce the incidence of drunk and drugged driving.

Drunk and drugged driving needlessly kills or injures hundreds of individuals each year. Mandatory participation in an ignition interlock program will ensure that the vast majority of the drivers convicted of drunk and drugged driving will finally be unable to continue to drive in a drunk or drugged condition, threatening the life and well-being of

The Honorable Brian E. Frosh, Chairman
Senate Bill 803
Page Two

all others on the roadway. Furthermore, the use of ignition interlock systems has been shown to lead to long-lasting changes in driver behavior and the reduction of recidivism.

More than 15,000 individuals annually are granted probation before judgment, convicted of a first offense or are repeat offenders. However, Maryland's current permissive program results in the participation of only approximately 6,000 individuals annually, a little more than 1/3 of the persons who would be enrolled under Senate Bill 803. Clearly, a mandatory program has the potential to not only remove the most egregious offenders from our roadways but also help to increase the likelihood that first time offenders do not become repeat offenders. Senate Bill 803 is a critical advancement in Maryland's efforts to keep our roadways safe. MedChi urges a favorable report.

For more information call:
Gene M. Ransom, III
410-539-0872