

# MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Thomas Mac Middleton, Chairman  
Members, Senate Finance Committee  
The Honorable Anthony Muse

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

DATE: March 21, 2012

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 784 – *Department of Health and Mental Hygiene –  
Workgroup on Cancer Clusters and Environmental Causes of Cancer*

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The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,600 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 784.

Senate Bill 784 requires the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), in consultation with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), to convene a workgroup of relevant stakeholders to specifically examine issues relative to potential cancer clusters in the State as well as the potential environmental causes of cancer. The bill delineates the specific charges of the workgroup which includes the State's process for indentifying and investigating cancer clusters; the communication between various State and Federal agencies regarding cancer clusters and their potential environmental causes; relevant research on these issues; and whether there is relevant and additional information that could and should be provided to the public regarding cancer clusters and environmental causes of cancer.

DHMH's Cancer Prevention, Education, Screening and Treatment Program currently coordinates the State's efforts with respect to reducing the morbidity and mortality rates for cancer in the State. There are multiple components to that program's efforts and the passage of Senate Bill 784 would enhance the work of that program by specifically focusing on cancer clusters and environmental causes of cancer. In addition, DHMH produces a report, titled the Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, which includes possible

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environmental causes of certain cancers. Again, passage of Senate Bill 784 will enhance DHMH's efforts to identify environmental causes of cancer and will specifically focus that information as it relates to potential cancer clusters.

Maryland has historically demonstrated high incidence rates for various types of cancer. Senate Bill 784 will ensure that the State is sufficiently focused on how these increased incidence statistics may correlate with cancer clusters and/or indicate potential environmental factors or causes for the increased incidence rates. Further, the focus of Senate Bill 784 is consistent with the effort by the Administration and public health professionals to address health disparities. Cancer clusters and environmental impacts that affect the rate of cancer are important aspects of tackling Maryland's multi-faceted health disparity challenges. MedChi believes the creation of the workgroup required by Senate Bill 784 will focus resources in an appropriate direction and urges a favorable report.

**For more information call:**

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