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TO: The Honorable Joseph F. Vallario, Jr., Chairman
Members, House Judiciary Committee
The Honorable Kevin Kelly

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

DATE: January 22, 2013

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1 – *Criminal Law – Cannabimimetic Agents - Prohibition*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the Maryland Chapter of the American College of Emergency Medicine Physicians, and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics wish to voice their support for House Bill 1 which codifies “cannabimimetic agents” to the State’s Schedule I controlled dangerous substances and adds several specific chemical substances that are considered cannabimimetic agents.

Synthetic cannabinoids are rapidly becoming a significant public health challenge. They are chemically engineered substances that are similar to the active ingredients in marijuana and produce a similar effect when smoked or ingested. The popularity and availability of these substances has grown in recent years, becoming a popular alternative to marijuana, particularly with youth, and have been linked to tachycardia, seizures, hallucinations and other responses commonly found with drug abuse. Criminal enforcement of the sale and possession of these substances has been challenging, since manufacturers can elude legal bans on products by making slight changes to their chemical structures.

In July 2012 the “Synthetic Drug Abuse Prevention Act of 2012 (SDAPA) was signed into law. SDAPA placed 26 substances on the federal list of Schedule I controlled dangerous substances, including all of the substances specified in this legislation. SDAPA also created a new definition of “cannabimimetic agents” with criteria by which similar chemical compounds are controlled. The SDAPA definition is identical to the one included in this bill.

Because Maryland law considers any substance placed on the federal government’s Schedule 1 to also be a Schedule 1 substance in the State unless the

The Honorable Joseph F. Vallario, Jr., Chairman
House Bill 1
Page Two

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) objects, and no objection was made to SDAPA, the substances encompassed by this bill are illegal in Maryland. However, codification of these substances in Maryland law assures their retention as Schedule 1 substances regardless of a change in federal law or DHMH policy. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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