

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 Thomas Mac Middleton, Chairman
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Catherine Pugh

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

DATE: February 20, 2013

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 496 – *Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Telemedicine*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,500 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 496 with an amendment.

Senate Bill 496 will extend current Maryland law as applies to health insurance carriers to the Maryland Medicaid program. Specifically, Senate Bill 496 requires the Medicaid program to “reimburse” a health care provider for telemedicine services in the same manner as if the service had been delivered in person. It is clear that the delivery of medical services by telemedicine is occurring on an exponential basis and is of particular value in accessing specialist care. Apparently, Maryland Medicaid is willing to acknowledge this with respect to rural locations seeking access to Maryland’s academic centers. However, Maryland Medicaid does not believe that telemedicine should be “reimbursed” if the patient is proximately located near the telemedicine consultant. Frankly, MedChi does not understand this distinction. The advantage of telemedicine is that the access can occur immediately rather than requiring the patient to make another appointment at another place at another time.

MedChi would ask for one amendment to Senate Bill 496 and that is to replace the word “reimburse” with the word “pay.” The fact is that doctors are not “reimbursed” by health insurance companies but are “paid” for services already delivered. MedChi believes that the use of the word “reimbursed” is misleading in that a doctor is not being “reimbursed” as if he or she were filing an expense account but rather is being “paid” for services delivered. With this amendment, MedChi urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 496.

For more information call:

Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
410-244-7000