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TO: The Honorable Brian E. Frosh, Chairman
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Joan Carter Conway, Chairman
Members, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Christopher Shank

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

DATE: March 13, 2013

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 570 – *Professional Licensing and Certification Governing Bodies – Child Abuse Mandated Reporter Training and Discipline*

On behalf of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP), we support Senate Bill 570 with amendment.

Senate Bill 570 seeks to address an issue the medical community has raised throughout the debate on the appropriate approach to instituting penalties for failure to report child abuse and neglect. One of the most challenging aspects of child abuse and neglect and reporting is the ability to appropriately identify abuse and neglect. Health care practitioners are not trained in the identification of abuse and neglect. Many cases of abuse and neglect can be easily mischaracterized as unfortunate accidents. Bruises, broken bones and other injuries are explained away and practitioners are not trained to sort through what is fact and fiction. As a result, MDAAP and MedChi have been proponents of enhanced education and training programs for health care practitioners to better prepare these practitioners to appropriately identify and report cases of child abuse and neglect.

Senate Bill 570 would make the completion of an education and training program on child abuse and neglect identification and reporting a condition of licensure for health professionals. While this clearly provides an approach to achieve the objectives the physician community has identified, mandating this education as a condition of licensure imposes a licensure obligation on broad range of physicians whose practice does not involve patient care and/or does not include treatment or interface with children and their families. Making this education a condition of licensure is too broad an application of the need to better education physicians and other health practitioners.

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MedChi and MDAAP would urge the Committee to amend the legislation to require the Board of Physicians and other health professional boards to develop and offer educational programs on child abuse and neglect identification and reporting and encourage and publicize the importance of education and training to the physician community. Such an approach has been utilized in the past. This educational effort could be done in conjunction with the professional societies that represent the physician community to maximize the number of physicians who receive this training.

If amended as noted, MedChi and MDAAP can support Senate Bill 570. Without such an amendment, the organizations must respectfully oppose.

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