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TO: The Honorable Dereck E. Davis, Chair
Members, House Economic Matters Committee
The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
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DATE: March 7, 2014

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1255 – *Food Service Facilities – Meals for Children*

On behalf of MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP), we support House Bill 1255.

House Bill 1255 is a call to action to begin to address the twin epidemics of childhood obesity and teen diabetes. In an effort to join the nation's endorsement for healthier lifestyles in the best interest of children, House Bill 1255 appeals to the food industry to curtail marketing to children and promote the consumption of healthy beverages by assuring that water and low-fat milk are the only drinks displayed on kid's menus. It is important to note that the bill doesn't prohibit food service establishments from selling other beverages to children. It just prohibits their inclusion into a children's meal that incorporates a beverage in the meal price.

Studies demonstrate that one-third of Maryland's youth are obese. Specifically, approximately 177,000 out of 615,000 Maryland children are considered obese. Within only the last 20 years, obesity has doubled in Maryland with impactful consequences on Maryland's finances and children's health. Obese children are more likely to be at risk for heart diseases, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and other mental and social disorders, and also more likely to become obese adults.

A major contributor to Maryland's childhood obesity epidemic is the marketing to children and the consumption of soft drinks/sugar drinks. The Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale found that the food industry spends more money on marketing sweetened drinks to children than it does for anything else, and children who consume soda are 60 percent more likely to be obese than those who do not.

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Several restaurant chains, such as McDonalds and Subway, are already responding to the demand for change by offering healthy choices. As in the past, when cancer causing, addictive products were unregulated, government intervened to protect its citizens. House Bill 1255 is a direct response to the societal need to combat childhood obesity and the health conditions that can arise from it. We request a favorable vote.

For more information call:

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