

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Brian E. Frosh, Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Jamie Raskin

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
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DATE: February 25, 2014

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 923 – *Medical Marijuana* –
Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Marijuana Commission

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents more than 8,000 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 923 with amendment.

Senate Bill 923 expands the provisions of the Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Marijuana Commission to include the certification of physicians under limited and well-defined circumstances to participate in the program created in 2013. MedChi has historically not taken a position on legislation related to the legalization of marijuana for medical purposes and has previously adopted the framework for consideration of medical marijuana policy outlined by the American Medical Association. However, in 2013 MedChi supported legislation that created the Natalie M. LaPrade Medical Marijuana Commission and the academic medical center program that was to be administered by the Commission. MedChi believed the program enacted in 2013 was structured in a manner that assured accountability, granted access to patients under limited and appropriate circumstances, and incorporated all the necessary oversight and evaluation required to ensure the program met but did not expand its objectives beyond that authorized.

Since the enactment of the original legislation, it has become obvious that limiting the program to academic medical centers is unrealistic and will fail to yield a legitimate program that creates access to medical marijuana for those limited number of patients who would benefit from such access and for which the program was designed. Senate Bill 923 provides

a mechanism that allows the program to maintain the accountability, oversight and evaluation

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components of the original program while increasing the potential for the implementation of a program where access to medical marijuana in carefully defined and controlled circumstances can be achieved.

The legislation will authorize the certification of physicians, under limited circumstances, to participate in the program and provide access to medical marijuana within the parameters established under the original program. These physicians must meet a number of specifically defined criteria to qualify for certification including being on staff with a hospital or hospice program. MedChi believes this staff affiliation requirement is critical to ensure that the physicians who are certified have met rigorous credentialing requirements.

To that end, MedChi would urge the Committee to include language that reinforces that certified physicians must be credentialed by a hospital or hospice and that the credentialing process must be comprehensive. Strengthening this language will allay the one concern MedChi has in supporting this legislation – the certification of physicians who will not operate within the limitations and accountability of the program. A strong credentialing requirement will, by its very nature, limit the physicians who participate. With its amendment noted, MedChi supports the passage of Senate Bill 923.

For more information call:

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