



The Maryland State Medical Society

1211 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5516
410.539.0871
Fax: 410.547.0915

1.800.492.1056

www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Peter A. Hammen, Chairman
Members of the House Health & Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Shirley Nathan-Pulliam

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

DATE: January 31, 2006

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 58 – *Maryland Health Care Commission – Racial Variations – Health Care Disparities Policy Report Card*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) which represents over 7,200 Maryland physicians and their patients supports House Bill 58.

Health care disparities, be they racial, economic or geographic, continue to confound the effort to assure adequate access to appropriate high quality health care for all Maryland citizens. House Bill 58 requires the Maryland Health Care Commission to evaluate racial disparities as a component of various evaluation studies they are already obligated to perform. If enacted, a racial variation component would be added to studies of HMO quality as well as quality of care in nursing homes, hospitals and ambulatory surgical facilities.

In addition to adding a racial variation component to existing studies, the Commission would also be required to evaluate state policies to reduce health disparities that include the findings of racial variation in the various studies and to annually publish a “health care disparities report card” that reflects a number of indicators of health care disparities based on race including morbidity/mortality rates, insurance coverage and the racial composition of the physician population.

MedChi applauds the sponsor of the bill for her leadership in aggressively pursuing the identification and evaluation of health care disparities, particularly racial variations. MedChi supports the concept of incorporating health care disparity indicators into studies of both quality and access. Only through a more comprehensive assessment of the factors that give rise to disparities can we begin to address them systematically.

For more information call:

Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
(410) 269 - 1618