

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chair
Members, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Shirley Nathan-Pulliam

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: March 18, 2015

RE: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT** – Senate Bill 471 – *Task Force to Study the Provision of Health Care Coverage to Uninsured Marylanders*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents more than 8,000 Maryland physicians and their patients, supports Senate Bill 471 with an amendment.

Senate Bill 471 organizes a Task Force for the purpose of studying the remaining pool of uninsured Marylanders who are not covered by health insurance despite the passage of the Federal Affordable Care Act. Unfortunately the Task Force does not appoint a single doctor to its membership and MedChi believes that that oversight should be cured by an appropriate amendment.

Many years before the Affordable Care Act, doctors in Maryland were creating health coverage for uninsured citizens. Senate Bill 471 references the Montgomery Cares Program (page 3, line 32) which is a creation of the Primary Care Coalition which was first created by two Montgomery County doctors in 1993 (Carroll Garvey, M.D. and Horace Bernton, M.D.) www.primarycarecoalition.org. Similar efforts occurred in other counties as well. Anne Arundel County doctors created a program called “REACH” in cooperation with the County Health Department starting in 1999. Some 700 physicians, providers, nurse practitioners, physical therapists and other health care professionals treated age 19-65 year old patients without insurance at a reduced rate based upon their income (about \$30 per visit). At one time, approximately 2,000 patients were involved in the REACH program but that has now been reduced to a few hundred because of the effect of the Federal Affordable Care Act.

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As Senate Bill 471 correctly realizes that there is a residual pool of patients who will not have health insurance despite the Affordable Care Act. In many cases these will be undocumented individuals. However, MedChi believes the entire system benefits when all citizens have regular access to health care and particularly to primary care doctors to avoid health problems which fester and end up in emergency rooms.

With the proposed addition of a doctor to the Task Force, MedChi supports Senate Bill 471.

For more information call:

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