

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Kirill Reznik
The Honorable Karen Lewis Young

FROM: Danna L. Kauffman
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 21, 2019

RE: **SUPPORT WITH SPONSOR AMENDMENT** – House Bill 835 – *Health Occupations – Practice of Optometry – Therapeutically Certified Optometrists*

OPPOSE – House Bill 471 – *Health Occupations – Requirements for the Practice of Optometry – Miscellaneous Revisions*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports with sponsor amendments** House Bill 835, which expands the optometric scope of practice by providing optometrists with greater prescribing authority and authorizing optometrists to independently treat primary open-angle glaucoma, following adoption of a treatment plan. MedChi believes House Bill 835 is a fair compromise that provides optometrists with additional authority to care for patients while protecting patients against the possibility of more invasive procedures.

In supporting House Bill 835, MedChi **opposes** House Bill 471, which we believe inappropriately expands the optometric scope of practice and risks patient safety. House Bill 471 grants broad authority to optometrists to prescribe ALL topical and oral medications, devices and treatments without appropriate safeguards, such as a prohibition on medications that must be injected or administered intravenously. MedChi also strongly opposes the absence of a physician in diagnosing and determining the appropriate treatment for a patient presenting with possible glaucoma. On a related note, MedChi also opposes the provision to allow an optometrist to treat all classes of glaucoma, even childhood glaucoma. In addition, MedChi opposes the language that would allow optometrists to administer or prescribe any treatment for the management of an ocular disease. This broad language could easily allow scalpel or laser surgery, which we strongly oppose.

For these and other reasons, we request a favorable vote on House Bill 835 with the amendments offered by the sponsor.

For more information call:

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