TO: The Honorable Joseph F. Vallario, Jr., Chairman
   Members, House Judiciary Committee
   The Honorable Kathleen Dumais

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

DATE: March 14, 2012


The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), which represents over 7,600 Maryland physicians and their patients, opposes House Bill 1102.

House Bill 1102 would permit the Attorney General to institute a civil action against a person, such as a physician, who “fails to report” abuse or neglect of a child, and to recover a penalty of up to $100,000 from the physician. The fines recovered would go into a fund that could be distributed to certain eligible groups.

MedChi objects to the provision of the bill which subjects physicians and other health care practitioners to a substantial fine, when adequate penalties already exist in the law for such a failure to report. In fact, the licensing statute for physicians in Maryland makes the failure to report abuse a basis for reprimand, probation, suspension or revocation of the physician’s license. See Health Occ., §14-404(a)(25). Moreover, the Board is already permitted to fine physicians for their failure to report. See Health Occ., §14-405.1.

MedChi does not believe that a physician who fails to report abuse or neglect would be further incentivized to do so by the presence of an additional fine. Loss of one’s license, rendering the person unable to practice medicine and earn a living, is the greatest penalty that could be put upon a physician, and therefore constitutes more than adequate motivation to
report child abuse and neglect. Further penalties in this respect would be superfluous and unnecessary.

For these reasons, MedChi opposes this legislation.

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