

STATE OF MARYLAND



Andrew N. Pollak
CHAIR

Ben Steffen
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MARYLAND HEALTH CARE COMMISSION

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February 26, 2020

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 600 – Health Insurance - Reimbursement of Primary Care Providers - Bonus Payments - Applicability - INFORMATION

Dear Chair Kelley:

The Maryland Health Care Commission (Commission) would like to provide the Senate Finance Committee with information related to Senate Bill 600 (SB 600). SB 600 requires health insurance carriers to pay bonus payments to primary care providers who provide services outside of normal business hours in non-hospital settings.

This policy was a recommendation of the Task Force on Health Care Access and Reimbursement in 2010. The Task Force recommended that insurance carriers and health plans provide a bonus payment when primary care providers (including physicians or nurses) provide scheduled or unscheduled care after hours. The Task Force also encourage increased use of telehealth. The Task Force thought that lack of availability of after-hours primary care services and telehealth services was a likely contributor to overutilization of emergency departments at hospitals.

Over the last decade, value-based payment reforms, including the Maryland Primary Care Program, have encouraged expansion of access to care outside of business hours. At the same time, the urgent care and retail clinic markets have grown, providing patients with more options for primary care services. Growth in urgent care and retail clinic use raise concerns about continuity of care, as patients seek convenience rather than sustained relationships with a primary care provider. Continuity of care issues are exacerbated when treatment is provided in

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urgent care centers and retail clinics that do not use electronic medical records systems that support information exchange with primary care providers. While bonus payments to primary care providers for expanded hours remains a good idea, today many better approaches exist to increase provider accountability and increase access to care. For example, the Maryland Primary Care Program (MDPCP) was established in 2019 to further the delivery of all six quality domains of the national quality strategy, including patient safety, effective clinical care, person and caregiver-centered experience and outcomes, communication and care coordination, community/population health, and efficiency and cost reduction.

I hope you find this information useful. Please feel free to contact me at (410) 764-3566 or Ben.Steffen@maryland.gov, or Megan Renfrew, Government Affairs and Special Projects, at (410) 764-3483 or Megan.Renfrew@maryland.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Steffen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ben Steffen

Executive Director

Maryland Health Care Commission

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