

My name is Paige Barocca. I am writing today as parent and a citizen to express my serious concern for the medical freedoms of parents and children in Maryland. I stand strongly against the Infant Lifetime Care Trust bill, as I feel that will limit choices for parents of children with birth injuries. New treatments come on the market every day. Medicine is improving at a rapid rate. Parents of severely disabled children are often more up to date on the newest research and experimental treatments than even the doctors are. If you force victims into this public fund it takes away the parents decision-making power about what kinds of treatments their children need. In addition, they could be putting potentially gruesome waits on these vulnerable victims. How often will the board meet to approve or deny treatments? In other states it is once a month, if that, as it is within their power to reschedule. These incredibly sick children deserve the best treatment, they do not have the time to wait for some board's approval.

The bill is leaving decisions out of the hands of parents and into the hands of vaguely defined medical staff. On page 10, line 9: "qualifying health care costs" are defined as "REASONABLE" expenses of medical, hospital and rehabilitative care, family residential services, custodial care, professional residential care, durable medical equipment, assistive technology, medically necessary drugs, and related travel, and residential or vehicle modifications that are necessary to meet the QUALIFIED PLAINTIFF'S HEALTH CARE NEED AS DETERMINED BY THE QUALIFIED PLAINTIFF'S TREATING PHYSICIANS, PHYSICIANS ASSISTANTS, OR NURSE PRACTITIONER'S, AND AS OTHERWISE DEFINED BY STATUTE OR REGULATION.

WHAT IS REASONABLE? WHO DECIDES WHO IS A QUALIFIED PHYSICIAN? What does it mean otherwise defined by statute or regulation? I interpret that to mean that the overseeing body can create regulation not in statute to limit the potential definition of qualified healthcare costs. What about my child's acupuncture, which has proven incredibly helpful? What about chiropractic care? What about art therapy? Or any other issue that our doctor may not be familiar with? Each time I would like to add something to my child's care, I would need to come to the board and beg for coverage that can be denied.

Furthermore, this fund will not be treating communities in need with the equal value given in richer neighborhoods. On page 18, line 21, it states that only "reasonable charges prevailing in the same community for similar treatment" So if you live in Ellicott City you may get more money, because the care in your area costs more simply because you live in an affluent area. But if you live in rural counties or in Baltimore City your child is entitled to lower valued care, as your community practitioners cannot charge more merely because of who the local clients are? Care in being rationed before the Board is even in place.

I'd like to end with a reflection of who this bill benefits. The people? Surely not. It seems as though we are supporting hospitals who are hoping to avoid large settlements for their neglect. Do we really want to live within a system that allows for excuses and funds to cover up poorly managed care? Why don't we, instead, spend a million dollars finding out why we are injuring and killing so many babies, especially black babies? As Maya Angelou said, "do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better!"

An Infant Lifetime Care Trust would be a step backwards, away from progress. We should be moving forward to provide more options for parents and children, along with safer and more accountable care. This bill is offensive and a grotesque violation of the rights of the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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