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**Bill No:** SB 837  
**Title:** Health – Advance Care Planning and Advance Directives  
**Committees:** Finance  
**Hearing:** March 11, 2021  
**Position:** SUPPORT

Horizon Foundation supports SB 837 as an important step in making it easier and more efficient to express and honor wishes for health care at the end of life.

Advance care planning has been found to improve the care experience and significantly reduce healthcare costs. When an advance directive does not exist, patients are more likely to receive unwanted treatments. It also increases the burden on health care providers as well as families and loved ones called on to make decisions for patients when they are unable to speak for themselves.

For the past five years, Horizon Foundation has worked with partners, including our local hospital, county government, physician groups, hospice providers, skilled nursing facilities, and faith communities on our Speak(easy) Howard advance care planning campaign. The campaign has successfully created public awareness and captured health care agents of Howard County residents. The campaign also takes advantage of legislation passed in 2016 that allows Maryland residents to create advance directives electronically.

Most Maryland residents, however, have still have not completed an advance directive or named a health care agent - on average, only 30% have taken action. And there remain several policy barriers that were addressed in the State Advisory Council on Quality Care at the End of Life's December 2020 report. These barriers have led to the low rate of advance directive completion across Maryland.

We encourage you to pass SB 837 to address these barriers. Through this legislation, Maryland has the opportunity to normalize advance care planning as a routine part of every person's health care. This legislation will also enable the effective completion and storage of advance care planning documents, improving the quality of care provided and ensuring that care aligns with a patient's treatment wishes.

Thank you for consideration of this testimony in support of SB 837.