



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2022

House Bill 378: Maryland Health Care Commission – Palliative Care Services – Workgroup
Written Testimony Only

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of the members of the Health Facilities Association of Maryland (HFAM), we appreciate the opportunity to offer our support for House Bill 378. HFAM represents over 170 skilled nursing centers and assisted living communities in Maryland, as well as nearly 80 associate businesses that offer products and services to healthcare providers.

House Bill 378 requires the Maryland Health Care Commission (MHCC) to convene a workgroup to study and make recommendations to improve palliative care services in the State. The workgroup must include representatives of hospice and palliative care providers, health care facilities, patient advocacy groups, and health insurers. The workgroup must submit an interim report by July 1, 2023, and a final report by November 1, 2023, including the need for any legislative initiatives, to the Governor and the General Assembly.

Palliative care refers to specialized medical care for individuals with serious illness that is focused on providing relief from the symptoms, pain, and stress of the illness. The goal of palliative care is to improve quality of life for the patient, their family, and caregivers. This type of care can be provided at any age, at any stage of a serious illness, and along with curative treatment.

This type of care is very important in long-term care settings. As people are generally living longer and even those who face chronic illness can enjoy a longer life, disease and treatments can still cause pain and adverse side effects. Palliative care is important because it gives patients symptom management and a higher quality of life while seeking curative treatment. It also helps families and caregivers in making each day a more positive experience for the patient.

Palliative care has been one of the fastest growing fields in healthcare. However, barriers to palliative care remain and include lack of awareness, cultural and social barriers, and inadequate resources. Together, we must ensure that our healthcare delivery system meets the needs of patients and families living with a serious illness, and that our caregivers are equipped with necessary tools and resources.

For these reasons, we request a favorable report from the Committee on House Bill 378.

Submitted by:
Joseph DeMattos, Jr.
President and CEO
(410) 290-5132