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March 6, 2022

The Honorable Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melynk
State of Maryland
Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
6 Bladen Street, 241 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: House Bill 1082 | Public Health - Consumer Health Information - Hub and Requirements

Dear Delegate Pens-Melynk:

Your commitment to the citizens of our state is clear, from your work as a legislator to your service on the Maryland Medicaid Advisory Committee. I am proud to serve alongside of you on this commission. Thank you for crafting and filing House Bill 1082. This invaluable legislation speaks to the consciousness of our state to ensure clarity for the disseminate health, safety and social services information to the families and communities we serve. HB 1082 is in direct accordance with the public education, research, and service accountability of the University of Maryland. Our patients and their caregivers will have at their access the University of Maryland Herschel S. Horowitz Center for Health Literacy as the State's Consumer Health Information Hub.

House Bill 1082 addresses the long overdue challenge that the lack of meaningful health education and comprehension imposes on families and communities. These challenges can range from confusion regarding prescribed medications, to the avoidance of a surgical procedure due to skepticism, fear, or unclear information, to vaccine mistrust or even potential death. This legislation supports the importance improving the utilization of consumer health care, and information. It will help to improve the understanding of imposed and or recommended safety measures and improve the skillsets necessary to better navigate social service resources and insurance benefits. Recipients of surgical procedures, disease treatment and preventive modalities may better articulate their comprehension with confidence. This elevated literacy will help the health care profession to better recognize the needs of patient populations and may help to avoid both common and uncommon missteps and miscommunications that occur too often at the detriment of some individuals, families and communities, especially those surviving through poverty.

Moreover, HB 1082 conserves Maryland finances and many other resources. This bill may help to preserve the career longevity surgeons, family physicians, pediatricians, dentists,

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nurses and other health care professionals. It could save lives, including that of exhausted providers and or sick patients.

Instituting the use of plain language in public as a requirement across State and local agencies is a proven grassroots approach that has far-reaching potential especially for those who suffer with illnesses, who exist in unsafe environments and who may be challenged to understand social services benefits. Plain language information and guidance is fundamental to making informed health care decisions, and to improving access to accurate, consistent, evidence-based content that can be better utilized and more clearly understood globally by many consumer populations.

Further, this legislation supports the important value of culturally and linguistically appropriate access to health care explanations and services. It is especially important during times of emergency and crisis responses to help avoid miscommunications. It is equally essential for nonemergency, and high-priority areas such as dental and diet disease prevention, and cigarette, alcohol and opioid abuse prevention.

Finally, in all of these circumstances health care consumers must be well informed regarding policy changes, revised and new services, and about their individual rights and responsibilities. This legislation affords Marylanders better chances for improved overall health, better engagement of appropriate health care services, and simply, a better chance at day-to-day survival. This legislation translates into a *win win* for Maryland. I ask that HB 1082 be awarded a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Winifred

Dr. Winifred J. Booker
President Elect, Maryland State Dental Association
Diplomate, American Board of Pediatric Dentistry