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February 29, 2024

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chairman  
Senate Budget & Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB 1092 – Vehicle Registration – Emergency Medical System Surcharge – Increase and Distribution of Funds – **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Dear. Senator Guzzone

TidalHealth, a Level 3 trauma center located in Salisbury on the Eastern Shore, respectfully supports SB 1092 with amendments.

TidalHealth is proud to serve as a beacon of hope and healing, providing comprehensive trauma care with more than 12 specialties available on call 24/7, every day of the year. Our dedication to maintaining this level of readiness comes with significant financial commitments, exceeding \$20 million annually to ensure access to the necessary physician specialists, a burden we shoulder without direct funding from the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC). Despite these challenges, our commitment does not waver. Last year, out of 2,600 trauma patients, TidalHealth transferred only a very small fraction to another hospital, highlighting our capability to provide high-level care. Our reach extends across the state, having treated patients from every county in Maryland, underscoring the universal impact and necessity of our services.

Prompted by our advocacy last year, the General Assembly enacted legislation to establish the Commission to Study Trauma Center Funding in Maryland (Chapter 342). Our Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Trudy Hall, served on this commission, contributing valuable insights towards improving Maryland's trauma care system. The final report of the Commission (dated January 2024) proffered numerous recommendations including a recommendation to increase the MVA assessment on vehicle registrations. SB 1092 implements one of the recommendations from the Commission's final report. Specifically, SB 1092 an increase to the vehicle registration fee from the current \$17 to \$40 and allocate the increased revenues as follows: (1) \$7.50 to the Trauma Fund; (2) \$9 to Shock Trauma and (3) balance to MEMSOF.

TidalHealth appreciates SB 1092 and the proposed increase in the vehicle registration fees. Indeed, the Trauma Commission report included such a recommendation. However, the Trauma Commission did not recommend carving out a portion of the revenues from the fee increase earmarked specifically for the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center.

Last year when creating the Trauma Commission - the General Assembly recognized the funding issues faced by the entire statewide trauma system – not just Shock Trauma. Also, Shock Trauma receives significant benefits from other State funding sources not available to the other trauma centers. Respectfully, TidalHealth supports SB 1092 with an amendment to delete the provision that requires the Governor annual to allocate at least \$9.00 of the surcharge directly to Shock Trauma (i.e., On page 2, delete lines 19-22).

Our experience and the challenges we face underscore the need for a more inclusive approach to trauma care funding. The gap in funding for Level 3 trauma centers, exacerbated by additional COMAR requirements, places undue strain on our resources and limits our capacity to serve our communities effectively. We urge all trauma centers to be lifted up, not a focus on one part of the system. All boats rise with a rising tide.

We believe that, with your support and leadership, we can implement innovative and sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by all Maryland's trauma care system.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to improving trauma care across Maryland. We look forward to your response and the opportunity to discuss these proposals further. Together, we can ensure that all Marylanders have access to the highest level of trauma care, regardless of where they live.

Sincerely



Christopher C. Hall  
Vice President Strategy / Chief Business Officer