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ABC MISSION:

To promote the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease including stroke, in Blacks and other minorities and to achieve health equity for all through the elimination of disparities.

March 5, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Re: House Bill 1137 – SUPPORT

Dear Madame Speaker,

The Association of Black Cardiologists is pleased to support House Bill 1137 emphasizing the importance of Coronary Calcium Score Testing for early detection of atherosclerotic plaque in people at risk of developing coronary artery disease.

House Bill 1137 would require Maryland Medical Assistance Program and insurers, nonprofit health plans, health maintenance organizations, and managed care organizations to provide coverage for calcium score testing in people who have three of the following four coronary disease risk factors:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Family history of premature coronary artery disease

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that an American dies from heart disease every 33 seconds, making heart disease the leading cause of death in the United States. Heart attacks kill more Americans than all cancers combined. Fatal heart attack victims have no symptoms until minutes before they die, hence early detection of high-risk asymptomatic individuals is needed. Early detection of coronary atherosclerosis allows people to be treated to prevent acute coronary events that could lead to untimely hospital visits or death.

Coronary calcium testing is an extremely accurate coronary risk assessment tool that has been adopted by the American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association guidelines and commercially available for over 20 years; however payers do not cover it. Coronary calcium is measured non-invasively with a 5-minute CT-scan of the heart, and costs less than \$200, whereas cancer screening with colonoscopy and mammography costs over \$3000. There is an opportunity to save lives and dollars if coronary calcium testing is covered for appropriately selected individuals. Passing this bill could reduce the mortality and morbidity from coronary disease by giving asymptomatic people an opportunity to passivate and limit progression of their coronary plaques before they have their first coronary event.

Thank you for this opportunity to register comments from the Association of Black Cardiologists.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Onwuanyi', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Anekwe E. Onwuanyi, MD
President
Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.