

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable Karen Lewis Young

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 1165 – *Public Health – Prohibition on Transfer of Human Immunodeficiency Virus – Repeal*

The Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), the largest physician organization in Maryland, **supports** Senate Bill 1165.

Senate Bill 1165 repeals Maryland’s criminalization of the transfer or attempt to transfer human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) to another individual. Repeal of this law would update Maryland statutes to be in line with current guidelines from the American Medical Association, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other leading organizations in the fields of medicine, public health, and human rights. The current law was enacted in 1989 when there was very little medical understanding of HIV or effective treatment. Today, there is highly effective treatment as well as pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis and, therefore, the disease is no longer a death sentence. However, stigma and discrimination continue to harm those living with HIV.

Effective HIV response requires access to high-quality preventative, diagnostic care, treatment, and supportive services that are non-stigmatizing, non-discriminatory, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of those affected. Criminalization laws perpetuate HIV-related stigma and discrimination, deter individuals from getting tested, and do not reflect our current understanding of HIV. Repeal of Maryland’s law is overdue. A favorable report is requested.