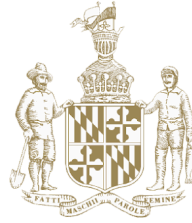


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Appropriations Committee
Chair, Health and
Social Services Subcommittee

Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB672

Public Health – Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund – Entities Eligible for Grants

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and esteemed members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 672, which clarifies the language of 2024’s HB 51 to provide the Pediatric Cancer Commission the authority to promptly disburse allocated grant funds to nonprofit researchers in the search for cancer treatment.

Cancer is the top disease-related cause of death for children in America and approximately 15,000 children and adolescents are diagnosed with cancer each year. As federal research funding continues to get slashed, affecting scientific research and discovery, it is imperative that Maryland continues to fund the needed, life-saving research and exploration of possible treatments.

As established, the Pediatric Cancer Research Fund was intended to support and fund pediatric research occurring at our top medical research institutions in our state. The fund was seeded with \$5 million, and requests for grants will be evaluated and reviewed by the Pediatric Cancer Research Commission. The commission, composed of nine medical experts through the National Institute of Health, Children’s National, University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins, and two survivors and caregivers, oversees the grant process to physicians, hospitals, laboratories, educational institutions, and other organizations and persons to ensure that the funds are effectively distributed. Since 2023, this fund has been the target of fund shifting while it sits unused. HB 672 will ensure that we remain faithful to the purpose of the fund: supporting critical research to save children’s lives.

The current fund allows for applications from private organizations and entities to obtain grant funding. However, there are no private entities or enterprises in Maryland that work in pediatric cancer research, which makes the required Request for Proposal (RFP) process burdensome and unduly delays fund distribution and research. While the Commission is ready to use the \$5 million allocated to distribute to grantees, this piece of legislation switches the grant application process to a Request for Application (RFA) process by removing the ability for private institutions to apply for this grant. Limiting the accessibility to nonprofit researchers and organizations, which were the original intended beneficiaries of this fund, protects these crucial

dollars by providing more discretion to the Commission to speedily disburse the funds without involving as many bureaucratic checkpoints in the application process.

There are children in our communities who have had their lives shattered by pediatric cancer. Any discontinuation in research forces children to rely on adult cancer research and treatments, which are not as medically effective, and often significantly more toxic. HB 672 restores the original intent of HB 51 by removing unnecessary procedural barriers and allowing the Pediatric Cancer Commission to efficiently direct funds to the nonprofit researchers who are ready and qualified to advance this work. Maryland has the expertise, the institutions, and the leadership to continue to contribute to the world of pediatric cancer research. By passing HB 672, you ensure that these critical dollars move swiftly from sitting in a fund to saving real lives.

Thank you for the committee's consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 672.