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RE: Letter of Support for House Bill 672 – Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund – Entities Eligible for Grants

Honorable Chair and Subcommittee members:

Good afternoon. Thank you for the honor of testifying today on behalf of the Johns Hopkins Division of Pediatric Oncology, of which I have been a member for close to 40 years and which I led for over 18 years. My name is Don Small, and I am a resident of Baltimore County. ***I am writing to express my support to amend which entities are eligible to receive grants from the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund.***

The proposed minimal revisions (deletions of 5 words) are highlighted and bracketed below:

to provide grants to [eligible physicians,] NONPROFIT hospitals, [laboratories,] educational institutions, and other NONPROFIT organizations [and persons] to conduct pediatric cancer research.

The effect of these minor revisions would be to restrict grant recipients to NONPROFIT hospitals, educational institutions, and other NONPROFIT organizations. The original intent of this bill was to enhance the limited funds that go towards childhood cancer research and without the changes proposed in HB672 the ability to achieve this goal is impacted. I have seen the impact that research has had on childhood cancers in the improved cure rate for children during my career. For example, Pediatric ALL cure rates have improved from 60-70% to greater than 90%. Eliminating FOR-PROFIT companies from being able to access these limited funds is important to create opportunities for hospitals and organizations with less resources. Specifically, FOR-PROFIT companies have other sources of funds and do very little pediatric cancer research.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to train scores of abundantly talented young scientists and physicians and to collaborate with brilliant colleagues during my almost 50 years as a physician-scientist at Johns Hopkins. And, most importantly, I have had the chance to help patients and families, in Maryland and beyond.

Support for pediatric cancer research has always been underfunded compared to adult cancers, comprising only 4-6% of the National Cancer Institute budget. Yet, when cured, these children have so much to contribute to society over many, many decades. I view the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund as an important step in partially overcoming this deficiency, and by making these changes, you will maximize the impact and benefit of these funds.

On this basis, I respectfully urge you to approve these minor clarifying revisions to this law and move HB672 favorably.

On behalf of myself and the children I treat, thank you for your consideration.