February 26, 2020

To: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman
Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Jennifer Witten, Vice President, Government Affairs
        Maryland Hospital Association

Re: Letter of Support- Senate Bill 763 – State Board of Physicians – Genetic Counselors – Licensing

Dear Chairman Pinsky:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 61 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 763. Maryland's hospitals are committed to ensuring each person who comes through their doors receives the best possible care. SB 763 would protect Marylanders by adopting standards for genetic counselors in our state—requiring appropriate training, reputable certifications, and ongoing continuing education.

Unlike in 22 other states, there is no legal standard in Maryland to determine who can represent themselves as genetic counselors. That is despite about 220 genetic counselors living or working in the state—60% in a clinical setting. Genetic counselors analyze patients' family and medical histories and counsel them as they try to make informed choices about their long-term health.

Setting standards for genetic counselors will give peace of mind to patients who base medical decisions on their guidance.

It also would give Maryland the needed authority to regulate these services by preventing unqualified people from practicing and suspending or revoking licenses when necessary.

This budget neutral step also would increase access to genetic services and providers in our state and help attract more trained genetic counselors to Maryland.

Maryland hospitals are committed to improving health care for all Marylanders. Part of that is ensuring they have access to trained, qualified professionals when seeking information that will help them make the right health care decisions for themselves and their families.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable* report.

For more information, please contact:
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