

March 4, 2020

To: The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

From: Barbara Epke
Interim President and CEO
Maryland Patient Safety Center

RE: Letter of Support---Senate Bill 879—Maryland Infant Lifetime Care Trust Funded by HSCRC and Maryland Patient Safety Center Duties

Thank you for the opportunity to express support of Senate Bill 879 on behalf of the Maryland Patient Safety Center. The MPSC is an independent organization, and our reputation has shown us to be effective as a convener of healthcare providers without institutional bias to disseminate best practices, educate and train allied healthcare workers, and facilitate discussion in order to improve patient safety. MPSC has been engaged in infant and maternal health initiatives since 2006, working on improving outcomes related to OB Hemorrhage, NEC (necrotizing enterocolitis), Early Elective Deliveries and “Golden Hour” protocols for infants in distress. More recently, we have seen significant success from our collaborative initiatives with Maryland hospitals focused on the reduction of first time C-sections and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome—establishing standardized treatment protocols for substance addicted infants. I believe the MPSC is uniquely qualified to conduct the duties as outlined in HB 879, specifically, to convene a certain Perinatal Clinical Advisory Committee, which will take certain actions and report annually to the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Infant Lifetime Care Trust.

The MPSC has long been familiar with the incidence of risk and injury at hospitals that deliver babies, as well as care needs of infants who suffer a neurological injury at birth. While it is understood that families may still hold hospitals and physicians accountable, the enormous resources required to adequately care for an infant sustaining an injury must be assured, and the fact that the proposed Trust will cover medical and supportive care for anyone receiving a court approved settlement or verdict for a birth-related neurological injury is progress indeed. It should be noted that because of our extensive experience in maternal and infant health related initiatives, the MPSC was chosen to participate in the Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program, a five-year initiative that began in October of 2019 and aims to improve maternal health across the state of Maryland.

The Maryland Patient Safety Center strongly supports Senate Bill 879—Maryland Infant Lifetime Care Trust Funded by HSCRC and Maryland Patient Safety Center Duties. The focus of the bill is clearly in line with our mission to promote safety and safe care in and beyond the hospital setting in the state of Maryland. Because of our existing relationships with hospitals and hospital appointed Patient Safety Officers, and because of our extensive experience in gathering, reviewing, and trending outcome data, MPSC is uniquely qualified to convene and lead a group to study and address disparities in care and to improve maternal and fetal outcomes across the state. In addition to identifying risks and obstacles to care, MPSC is experienced in working with hospitals on the next step in managing such issues, including establishing or proposing protocols, procedures and policies for improvement.

The horizon for risk has expanded to include healthcare disparities and implicit bias, an area now receiving attention in the aforementioned Maryland Maternal Health Innovation Program, funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The MPSC welcomes this opportunity to move safe infant care to a new level and is grateful to be able to devote resources to the education, analysis, and collaboration with hospitals and local agencies to foster the actual improvement. The MPSC is prepared to both report routinely to the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Infant Lifetime Care Trust as well as to submit a written report of progress.

In conclusion, the MPSC is in complete support of Senate Bill 879 and we are excited to assist the State with the initiative proposed, so that together we can improve the quality of care received by infants in Maryland. Should you wish to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

For more information, please contact:

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