

MedChi

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TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Gabriel Acevero

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman
Richard A. Tabuteau

DATE: February 26, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1079 – *Sickle Cell Trait Screening, Treatment, Education, and Public Awareness (Journey's Law)*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP), we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 1079.

House Bill 1079 requires the Maryland Department of Health, in collaboration with the Steering Committee on Services for Adults with Sickle Cell Disease and local health planning agencies to develop a public awareness campaign on the importance of an individual knowing their sickle cell trait status; receiving screening for the sickle cell trait; and receiving counseling if they carry the sickle cell trait.

The Statewide Steering Committee for Adults with Sickle Cell Disease was established in 2007 to create institutional and community partnerships and a statewide network of stakeholders who care for individuals with sickle cell disease and was also charged with educating individuals with sickle cell disease, the public, and health care providers about options for care of sickle cell disease in Maryland. In 2019, the membership and charge of the Steering Committee was expanded to include providing resources for detecting sickle cell disease and supporting individuals with sickle cell disease.

Sickle cell trait, the subject of this legislation, is not a disease but refers to an individual's genetic makeup and whether they have inherited a specific gene for hemoglobin. If both parents have the sickle cell trait, there is a one in four chance that their child will have sickle cell disease. One in 10 African Americans has the sickle cell trait. People of other nationalities also have sickle cell trait, but it is less common. Individuals with the sickle cell trait have the same life expectancy as the general population, but are at risk for certain conditions, including blood in the urine, kidney cancer, complications with trauma to the eye, spleen tissue death at high altitudes, and false positives on A1C type 2 diabetes tests.

MedChi and MDAAP recognize the ongoing challenges in addressing health outcomes among people with the sickle cell trait and sickle cell disease and the importance of outreach and education to help ensure they can make informed health decisions when they are aware of their sickle cell trait status. Passage of House Bill 1079 will help provide that outreach and education. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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