



Hospice & Palliative Care Network OF MARYLAND

March 19, 2021

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

The Hospice and Palliative Care Network of Maryland appreciates the opportunity to provide this Letter of Information on **House Bill 1112: Public Health – Maternal and Child Mortality – Review and Perinatal Hospice Services**. Please note that this letter is premised on our understanding that the sponsor will be introducing amendments for the Committee’s consideration to remove provisions in the bill related to the State Child Fatality Review Team and the Maternal Mortality Review Program. With those amendments, House Bill 1112 seeks to provide information to a pregnant woman and her family on perinatal hospice services when a physician or nurse practitioner has diagnosed an unborn child as having a lethal fetal anomaly.

While we fully support the intent of House Bill 1112, we are concerned that this bill may be premature given that this is an unreimbursed service under the commercial market and Medicaid is not required under licensure standards. Without insurance coverage, these services are currently provided solely through philanthropic support and many hospices are unable to subsidize the expenses associated with such a program.

Perinatal hospice is a comprehensive multidisciplinary framework designed to support families who are carrying unborn babies with life threatening diagnoses. The support roles that are offered through perinatal hospice include access to the following services and professionals - Bereavement Specialists, Child Life Specialists, Volunteers, Chaplaincy, Social Work, Certified Perinatal Loss Care Nurses and Hospice Physicians. Important to families during this difficult time are tasks such as pre-planning funeral arrangements for their baby, telling siblings in the home that their baby sister or brother is going to die, helping to process grief in a pregnant mother, supporting a father who shares his own unique grief, preparing birth plans that communicate a family’s wishes in the delivery room and supporting the hospital staff. Perinatal hospice teams, through research and experience, are trained and excel at addressing these challenges. Most families facing the challenges of potentially losing their newborn express that it is a very isolating time with extremely limited resources. Hospital based medical teams who are caring for them also express that they struggle finding community supports for this very unfortunate niche population. Clearly, there is a tremendous need for perinatal hospice care.

The Hospice and Palliative Care Network of Maryland is willing to work with the Committee to determine necessary steps needed to ensure that perinatal hospice care is a covered benefit. We thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this information.

For more information:

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