



Maryland
Hospital Association

March 10, 2022

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

Re: Letter of Support - Senate Bill 824 - Health - Accessibility of Electronic Advance Care Planning Documents

Dear Chair Kelley:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 824. Maryland hospitals agree end-of-life care should be improved and become a routine part of patient care. Health systems can ease this process by embedding advance care planning into their internal processes and ensuring this information becomes part of a patient's electronic health record and can be easily accessed.

MHA appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Advance Directives Workgroup. We agree with the report findings that Maryland health care systems play an important role in efforts to identify and record a patient's health care decision-making proxy and advanced directives. Hospitals, however, do not play the only role.

We agree that conversations health care practitioners have with patients to inform them of their options, empowering them to submit this information, are ideally initiated prior to a hospital visit. Further, providers across the health care spectrum must be able to access this information at a moment's notice. Critically, providers must be confident they have the most recent version of a patient's wishes.

SB 824 as introduced places an emphasis on advance care plans over the documentation of a health care agent, which is a deviation from the recommendations of the Advance Directives Workgroup. The work group agreed naming an authorized agent is the appropriate starting point for patients to understand the importance of advance care planning. The work group also recognized the important role CRISP will play connecting providers to this information. We believe it is important to ensure the requirements in the bill reflect CRISP's capabilities or plans for development and are aligned with current and evolving practices.

MHA supports the intent of the legislation and looks forward to working with the bill sponsor and committee to align the bill with the work group recommendations and ensure successful implementation.

For more information, please contact:
Brian Sims, Director, Quality & Health Improvement
Bsims@mhaonline.org