



**UPMC Western Maryland**

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February 21, 2022

The Honorable Delores Kelley, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
3 East  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: SB 350 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Community Violence Prevention Services**

Dear Madam Chair:

UPMC Western Maryland appreciates this opportunity to express our support for the abovementioned legislation aimed at enhancing community violence prevention services for victims throughout Maryland.

Since early 2020, UPMC Western Maryland has navigated the many challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our hospital expanded critical care capacity, managed staffing to meet the needs of our unprecedented inpatient census, and hosted vaccine clinics for employees and the general public. Throughout the pandemic, our hospital and its nearly 2,100 employees continued to provide high-quality care for all patients, regardless of their ability to pay. In fiscal year 2021, UPMC Western Maryland provided \$14 million in charity care (free health care) to patients who were unable to pay.

The services that we provide for our rural part of the state include confidential, compassionate care for individuals of all ages who may be victims of domestic or sexual violence, elder abuse, or physical/sexual assault. These services are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Additionally, our Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Department helps health care providers prepare to respond to domestic or sexual violence cases.

Substance abuse, which continues to have a devastating impact on the health of our community, is intimately linked to domestic violence, and, unfortunately, substance abuse often becomes a shared affliction between domestic violence perpetrators and the victims.

<sup>(a)</sup>According to the American Psychological Association, heavy use of drugs or alcohol increases a person's chances of becoming abusive, and the mental anguish resulting from the domestic violence causes many victims to turn to dangerous substances in order to ease the strain of the repeated abuse—resulting in the victim also becoming an abuser.

<sup>(a)</sup> <https://www.gov1.com/public-health/articles>

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The proposed legislation will not only complement existing violence prevention services, it will help establish a unified, consistent, and sustainable statewide process for Maryland hospitals, government agencies, and community-based violence intervention programs. This coordinated approach will enable UPMC Western Maryland and community agencies to generate, share, and benefit from evidence-based data to develop best practices in serving the victims and preventing further violence.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Senate Finance Committee give a **favorable report** to SB 350. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michele R. Martz

President

cc: Senate Finance Committee Members

Senator George Edwards  
Delegate Wendell Beitzel  
Delegate Jason Buckel  
Delegate Mike McKay  
Maryland Hospital Association  
Nicole Fedeli, UPMC  
JR Reith, RWL