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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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The Senate of Maryland

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 16, 2022

To Chair Kelley, Vice-Chair Feldman, and the members of the Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this legislation before you today.

Dr. Sophie Lanzkron is the Director of the Adult Sickle Cell Clinic at John Hopkins and Co-Chair of the Maryland Statewide Steering Committee on Services to Adults with Sickle Cell Disease. In December 2008, the committee issued its report advising the public and its officials of the situation in Maryland: Expanding Comprehensive Services for Adults with Sickle Cell Disease. After the report was issued, the Committee went dormant until it was reactivated in 2019. However, Dr. Lanzkron, would be quick to tell you there is no funding for the committee to support any needed sickle cell outreach programs to expand the services to those suffering the devastating effects of Sickle Cell Disease or inform the public through testing and counseling upon a Sickle Cell Disease or inform the public through testing and counseling upon a Sickle Cell Trait positive test.

There are few trained hematologists in Maryland who are well versed in the treatment of SCD and NONE in Harford and Cecil counties or the rural counties of the Eastern Shore. The Eastern Shore has more than double the population of SCD patients than Harford and Cecil combined. Despite the overwhelming numbers of individuals with a positive Sickle Cell Trait test in those areas, SCD patients are forced to travel to Baltimore, Delaware, Washington DC, and Virginia for expert health care. A sickle cell registry would provide the demographic information needed to identify where SCD health care providers and facilities are needed.

SCD is the root cause of many catastrophic illnesses. Chronic Organ Damage with related complications may go unreported. SCD can affect the brain, eyes, heart, lungs, liver, gallbladder, spleen, kidneys, and bones. This is not an exhaustive list. Currently, we have fellow Marylanders with Sickle Cell Disease who are suffering without access to the knowledge and health care needed to treat their condition. A sickle cell registry would help to determine where the needs are greatest and what needs are currently unmet due to inadequate healthcare facilities. **For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable vote for SB 859.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron L. Watson".

Senator Ron Watson