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

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
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Christine K. Krone

DATE: February 16, 2022

RE: **OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED** – House Bill 765 – *Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Program*

On behalf of the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) and the Maryland Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (MDACOG), we submit this letter of **opposition** for House Bill 765 **unless the bill is amended to be consistent with the regulatory structure developed during the interim.**

House Bill 765, a reintroduction of legislation proposed in 2021, requires coverage of doula services under the Medicaid program subject to certain specific regulatory parameters. MedChi and MDACOG fully support the coverage of Doula services by Medicaid, as studies have demonstrated that having a doula present at births can in many circumstances improve outcomes. Doulas can be an important component of the birth team that all women should be able to access. While they support doula coverage under Medicaid to enhance access to doula services for low-income women, they are concerned that specific provisions of the bill present a number of barriers and unintended consequences to achieving that objective and are not aligned with the regulatory structure developed during the 2021 interim through the Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group (DTAAG) that was convened following the 2021 Legislative Session.

A comprehensive regulatory framework that reflected the consensus of the DTAAG was proposed in the Maryland Register in December 2021. It is our understanding that if the regulations are adopted Medicaid will commence implementation in early 2022. There has also been another bill introduced (House Bill 669) that directly reflects the regulatory structure agreed upon by all stakeholders. MedChi and MDACOG strongly support enhancing access to and utilization of doula services. However, House Bill 765 is not in line with the structure that stakeholders have agreed to, as reflected in the proposed regulations. An unfavorable report is requested unless the bill is amended to mirror the agreed upon regulatory structure.

For more information call:
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