

February 13, 2024

Committee: Finance, Maryland General Assembly

Bill: SB0614, Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance - Coverage for Orthoses and Prostheses

In support of SB0614

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for Bill SB0614, the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and Health Insurance Coverage for Orthoses and Prostheses. I am speaking in my individual capacity. The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Johns Hopkins University & Medicine. I am a Physiatrist (Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation physician) and have dedicated the majority of my 20+ years career to treat patient who need prosthesis and orthoses to perform the activities they need and enjoy as part of a fulfilling in life. Maryland has been my home since 2000.

As a physician deeply involved in the care of individuals with orthotic and prosthetic needs, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that access to these essential devices can have on a patient's quality of life.

Orthoses and prostheses are not merely durable medical equipment or medical devices; they are life-changing tools that empower people with amputations, limb differences, and neurologic disease to regain mobility, independence, and dignity. However, despite their crucial role in facilitating rehabilitation and improving functional outcomes, many individuals face significant barriers in accessing these devices, particularly when they are needed for activities beyond basic activities of daily living or mobility.

Bill SB0614 seeks to address this issue by ensuring coverage for orthoses and prostheses under the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and health insurance plans. By supporting access to these vital devices needed for occupational and advanced activities, the bill will positively impact the lives of countless Maryland residents, empowering them to lead fuller, dynamic lives.

Providing coverage for orthoses and prostheses is not just a matter of improving individual health outcomes; it is also a sound fiscal investment. By enabling individuals to maintain or regain their independence and productivity, access to orthotic and prosthetic devices can reduce long-term healthcare costs associated with complications, hospitalizations, and disability-related services. Many people in need of these devices would be able to return to work or develop new occupational interests that are not possible in the absence of such devices.

Furthermore, supporting this bill aligns with the fundamental principles of equity and inclusivity in healthcare. Every individual, regardless of their socioeconomic status, deserves access to the

care and resources necessary to achieve optimal health and well-being. By guaranteeing coverage for orthoses and prostheses, we are reaffirming our commitment to ensuring that all Maryland residents have the opportunity to live their lives to the fullest extent possible.

I urge you to support Bill SB0614 and help make orthotic and prosthetic care more accessible to those who need it most. By doing so, we can make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals with physical disabilities, empowering them to overcome challenges and pursue their dreams with confidence and dignity.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Marlís González-Fernández'.

Marlís González-Fernández, MD, PhD, ABPMR
Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation