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Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, Inc.
A Voice for Private Physicians Since 1943
Omnia pro aegroto

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Statement in Support of HB 1422 - Protections Against Discrimination – Genetic Procedures

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement in support of HB 1422.

The Association of American Physicians and Surgeons – AAPS – is a non-partisan professional association of physicians in all types of practices and specialties across the United States. Since 1943, AAPS has been dedicated to the highest ethical standards of the Oath of Hippocrates and to preserving the sanctity of the patient-physician relationship and the practice of private medicine. Our motto, “omnia pro aegroto” means “all for the patient.”

In the AAPS Patient Bill of Rights, it is affirmed that patients must have “the right to refuse medical treatment.” In addition, the AAPS Code of Medical Practice states that it is “inimical to the interests of the patient and the public ... and destructive to the professional nature of medical practice ... to pressure patients to accept [unwanted] medical care.” HB 1422, by protecting patients from discrimination for refusing certain types of treatment, aligns with these principles espoused by AAPS that are also enshrined in foundational concepts of medical ethics like requirements of informed consent.

It is also important to note that therapies that involve genetic manipulation, while holding potential promise, are currently still largely experimental. “We are out on the far edge of experimentation,” warned New York University ethicist Arthur Caplan when asked about the recent death of a 27-year-old involved in a study involving a gene-editing technique.

Thus, it is exceedingly critical for Maryland to adopt protections that are stronger than the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA), which merely prevents the use of genetic information about a person in limited circumstances. GINA does not include protections for individuals who refuse genetic procedures or treatments.

In summary, HB 1422 should be adopted. Please protect patients’ ability to refuse genetic treatments — that incur increased risks and have unknown and unknowable side-effects — without harming their ability to participate in society.

Respectfully submitted,

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