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CHRISTOPHER D. KEARNEY, M.D.
CHAIRPERSON

STATE OF MARYLAND ADVISORY COUNCIL ON QUALITY CARE AT THE END OF LIFE

February 5, 2024

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk joseline.pena.melnyk@house.state.md.us
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Taylor House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen St, Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 461 – Health – State Advisory Council on Quality Care at the End of Life –
Renaming - **SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk,

The State Advisory Council on Quality Care at the End of Life (Council) unanimously supports House Bill 461 which would change the Council’s name to be the “State Advisory Council on Serious Illness Care.”

For over 20 years, the Council has played a vital role in advising the legislature and State agencies on many issues relating to the care of seriously ill patients, with a special focus on patients at the end of life. While the Council will continue to provide this advice and advocate for patients at the end of life, it is important for the Council to also highlight its current role in providing advice regarding how to improve care for Marylanders who are not dying but who are living with the burden of serious chronic illness, impacted by a myriad of medical, pharmaceutical, insurance, and legislative issues.

The need for an updated name is shown by the Council’s recent work with the Palliative Care Services Workgroup convened by the Maryland Health Care Commission at the direction of the General Assembly. The Workgroup’s final report [chcf_palliative_care_fnl_report_oct23.pdf \(maryland.gov\)](#) in part recommended the Council (1) act as a partner to collaboratively support the development of comprehensive evidence-based education programs aimed at promoting palliative care among healthcare providers and the general public, and (2) act as a partner to collaboratively develop a strategy for the promotion and sustainability of community-based palliative care services. Indeed, the report adopted the Center to Advance Palliative Care’s definition of “palliative care,” which reads in part: “Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the patient’s prognosis. It is appropriate at any age and any stage of a serious

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illness, and it can be provided along with curative treatment.” Thus, palliative care does not apply only to patients at the end of life but applies to all patients with serious illness.

The name “State Advisory Council on Serious Illness Care” would better match the Council’s role in advising policy makers regarding the care of chronically ill people who are suffering with multiple illnesses for long periods of time, who may include, but are not limited to, people who are actively dying. This new name would also be consistent with the name used for similar advisory councils across the United States.

For all the foregoing reasons, the State Advisory Council on Quality Care at the End of Life SUPPORTS the passage of House Bill 461.

Sincerely,

Christopher D. Kearney, M.D.
Chairperson

cc: Delegate Ashanti Martinez ashanti.martinez@house.state.md.us