

TO: The Honorable Joseline Peña-Melnyk, Chair
House, Health & Government Operations Committee

HB1301
Favorable

FROM: David Stockwell
Chief Medical Officer, Johns Hopkins Children's Center

DATE: March 10, 2025

RE: HB1301 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program and Health Insurance – Transfers to Special Pediatric Hospitals – Prior Authorization

Johns Hopkins supports **HB1301 – Maryland Medical Assistance Program, Maryland Children's Health Program, and Health Insurance – Transfers to Special Pediatric Hospitals – Prior Authorizations**. This bill prohibits the use of prior authorization for admissions to pediatric hospitals. It will maximize the existing capacity of specialized hospitals and help improve patient throughput at Maryland's general hospitals.

Johns Hopkins Medicine co-owns MWPH with the University of Maryland Medical System. This bill will allow the Mount Washington Pediatric Hospital (MWPH) to more effectively play its vital role in the broader spectrum of care available to children in Maryland. This committee is well aware of the challenges faced by children in Maryland who are stuck in acute-care hospitals when that level of care is no longer needed. Johns Hopkins also supports HB962 Public Health – Pediatric Hospital Overstay Patients, which addresses a different component of this problem.

At Johns Hopkins Children's Center (JHCC), we provide high quality acute care to pediatric patients. Our top priority is the safety and well-being of children. We are proud of the work we do on behalf of our patients. However, it is important for the patients and for the hospital to transfer those patients seamlessly when their' can be met at a lower level of acuity. This helps ensure patients receive the type of care they need. It also helps ensure that the hospital's beds are available for those children that need them.

In this sense, then, this bill seeks to address a problem very much related to that of pediatric overstays. In those cases, children who no longer have medical necessity to remain in JHCC do so for an extended period of time because there is no place for them to go. This bill is similarly concerned with children who no longer meet medical necessity for JHCC, and are ready for a lower-intensity care at MWPH. Because payors require prior authorization before transfer, we see patients sit for a day or more. And each day counts. The cumulative impact on the hospital of an extra unnecessary day here and there is significant. This is especially true when our hospital remains at or above capacity. Johns Hopkins appreciates this committee's attention to so many issues that stand in the way of our ability to care for Maryland's children. We urge a **FAVORABLE** committee report on **HB1301**.