

Maryland Department of Health Statewide Steering Committee on Sickle Cell Disease

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The Honorable Heather Bagnall, Chair
The Honorable Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair Information
Maryland House of Delegates
Health Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

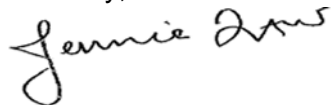
Dear Delegate Heather Bagnall and the members of the Health Committee,

The Statewide Steering Committee on Sickle Cell Disease is in strong support with amendments of House Bill 178: "Public Health-Sickle Cell Disease-Specialized Clinics and Scholarship Program for Medical Residents".

This bill addresses the significant gaps in access to care for patients living with sickle cell disease throughout the state of Maryland. County of residence should not determine clinical outcomes for patients living with this severe disease. Evidence shows that accessing care close to where one lives improves outcomes.

In Maryland, comprehensive sickle cell clinics are only available in Baltimore City. A hub and spoke model for care distribution for patients living with sickle cell disease in Prince George's County has significantly enhanced access to care and improved clinical outcomes. In particular, this model has reduced emergency department visits by 63% and hospital admissions by 41% within Prince George's County. Improving access to care via a "hub and spoke" model is evidence-based and clearly shown to improve care outcomes in other disease states. We believe that the bill should clarify that a portion of funding will go to support already established specialized sickle cell disease hubs within Maryland. Without a strong hub, it would be challenging for this model to be effective to deliver coordinated care. This hub and spoke model will be able to establish a standard in Maryland that can strengthen sickle cell care in future years. The committee recommends that the budget be managed by an employee who can equitably distribute the funds in an effective manner.

Sincerely,



Jennie Law, MD

Rev. Dr. R. Lorraine Brown

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