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Date: April 2, 2026

Bill # / Title: Senate Bill 385 - Recommendations for Immunizations, Screenings, and Preventive Services – Pharmacist Administration and Required Health Insurance Coverage (The Vax Act)

Committee: House Health Committee

Position: Support

The Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) appreciates the opportunity to share its support for Senate Bill 385. Senate Bill 385 is in an identical posture as its cross-file, House Bill 637, which received a favorable recommendation by this committee.

Senate Bill 385 amends §§ 18-328 through 332, § 12-508 of the Health Occupations Article, and §§ 15-1A-10 and 15-817 of the Insurance Article relating to recommendations and coverage for preventive services. The bill also creates § 18-112 of the Health General Article which lists scientific organizations upon whose guidance recommendations may be based. The Secretary must make recommendations that follow the generally accepted consensus within the scientific community in accordance with leading medical organizations, and must also consider the applicable guidance of enumerated state and federal advisory bodies.

Additionally, before adopting a recommendation for a preventive service that is not an immunization and has not received a recommendation from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or an A or B rating from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, the Secretary must hold a notice and comment period, obtain a mandated benefits analysis from the Maryland Health Care Commission, and cite the applicable recommendations of the authoritative medical organizations.

The bill ensures that the recommendations of the Secretary for preventive care made pursuant to § 18-112 of the Health General Article are covered without cost-sharing requirements under non-grandfathered health benefit plans offered by carriers. The element is important to provide equitable access to preventative services, which lay the foundation for health and have immeasurable impact across the State.

It is important to note that this bill, as drafted, does not create a new mandate for preventive care services. The intent of Senate Bill 385 is not to require carriers to cover new types of services, but merely to change the governing authority that identifies the types of services that are considered “preventive,” and therefore are already required to be covered under existing law. The bill’s main purpose is to ensure that recommendations are made by credible health organizations and can be used to inform essential care with corresponding coverage by insurance carriers. It is intended to expand the accessibility and accuracy of preventative services to improve the health of Marylanders in the long term.

For the reasons set forth above, the MIA respectfully requests a favorable committee report on Senate Bill 385 and thanks the Committee for the opportunity to share its support.