

Maryland's hospitals seek key policy reforms

Posted by [Alan Van Wormer](#) On 02/28/2019

Elkridge, MD – Three key pieces of legislation aimed at modernizing care delivery, ensuring objectivity and predictability in the medical liability climate, and advancing efficient and effective behavioral health care are being proposed by the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA) during the state's 2019 legislative session.

The bills, currently being considered by members of the Maryland General Assembly, help ensure the success of the state's unique health care financing system — the Total Cost of Care Model.

"The Maryland Hospital Association is proud to support legislation that will improve the health care landscape in the state," says Bob Atlas, President & CEO of MHA. "These three measures go a long way toward helping the state's hospitals provide high-quality, cost-effective care — a primary goal of both our hospitals and our legislators."

MHA is advancing the following bills:

- **Modernizing Maryland's Certificate of Need Program**

SB 597 / HB 646 - Maryland Health Care Commission – State Health Plan and Certificate of Need for Hospital Capital Expenditures: Some portions of Maryland's Certificate of Need program are 20 years old and woefully out of date with a care delivery system that is transforming. This bill would require the goals of the model to be considered when making determinations of need, ensure state health plan chapters are routinely updated, and raise the threshold for hospital projects. Introduced in both chambers, the lead sponsors are Sen. Delores G. Kelley, Chair, Senate Finance Committee (Dist. 10, Baltimore County) and Del. Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee (Dist. 13, Howard County).

- **Ensuring Objectivity and Predictability in Maryland's Medical Liability Climate**

SB 784 / HB 1323: Civil Actions – Health Care Malpractice Claims (Life Care Act 2019): The Life Care Act 2019 seeks to establish objectivity and predictability in medical liability cases. Under the bill, expert witnesses would be required to rely on the standard used by federal courts and 31 other states when testifying. It also would tie the cost of a plaintiff's medical services to rates set in the statute. The legislation aims to ensure plaintiffs receive the services they need while also objectively quantifying the value of the care over a plaintiff's lifetime. The legislation is sponsored by Sen. Chris West (Dist. 42, Baltimore County) and Del. Samuel Rosenberg (Dist. 41, Baltimore City).

- **Advancing Efficient and Effective Behavioral Health Care**

SB 992 / HB 1338: Prescription Drug Monitoring Data – Health Care Facility: This legislation allows the delegation to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to be set at the hospital or health care system level — rather than be limited to the physician level. To continue to make strides in addressing Maryland's opioid crisis, this change would help ensure the drug monitoring program is operating as effectively and efficiently as possible while maintaining existing delegation and privacy standards. The legislation is sponsored by Sen. Katherine Klausmeier (Dist. 8, Baltimore County) and Del. Erek L. Barron (Dist. 24, Prince George's County).

In addition to proactively introducing these legislative solutions, MHA's top priority is to protect Gov. Larry Hogan's budget recommendation to reduce the Medicaid Deficit Assessment by \$40 million. The Medicaid Deficit Assessment artificially raises the cost of health care. Gov. Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly's commitment to reducing the tax would directly benefit patients by reducing costs on their medical bills. The proposed reduction demonstrates the state's commitment to help hospitals meet the aggressive financial targets of the Total Cost of Care Model.

"MHA is pleased that so many of the state's leaders are committed to supporting the health of Maryland's residents through these common-sense bills," notes Nicole Stallings, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs at MHA. "Passing these efforts will demonstrate once again the state's dedication to ensuring the Maryland has a health care system that operates efficiently and effectively for patients and their care providers."