

MID-ATLANTIC ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

*Serving Maryland and Delaware*

4483-B Forbes Boulevard  
Forbes Center Building II  
Lanham, Maryland 20706



(301) 577-0097  
Fax (301) 577-4789  
www.machc.com

TO: The Honorable Peter A. Hammen, Chairman  
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee  
The Honorable James Hubbard

FROM: Joseph A. Schwartz, III  
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise

DATE: February 17, 2011

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 450 – *Maryland Community Health Resources Commission – Health Care Reform – Safety Net Providers*

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The Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers (MACHC) whose members include Maryland's federally qualified health centers (FQHC) serving Maryland's medically underserved and uninsured citizens, supports House Bill 450.

House Bill 450 enhances Maryland's commitment to support and enhance safety net providers in the State. The Community Health Resource Commission was created in 2005 to provide support to community health resources in order to increase access to health care for Maryland's uninsured and underinsured. Over the last 5 years the Commission has provided grants to community based resources throughout the State and has served as an incubator for the development of innovative health care delivery services that have increased both access to and the quality of health care services available to Maryland's most vulnerable citizens. House Bill 450 authorizes the Commission to also assist safety net providers with the implementation of federal health reform.

The Governor's Health Care Reform Coordinating Council specifically included in its final report a recommendation that the State encourage the active participation of safety net providers in health reform. The Commission with its existing charge was identified by the Coordinating Council as the logical entity to assist these providers. House Bill 450 implements that recommendation.

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Because federal health reform seeks to provide all individuals with health care coverage, there is a mistaken belief amongst many that the needs of the uninsured will decrease and access to care will be addressed. While reform will dramatically increase the number of individuals covered by health insurance, there will remain many who are uninsured. Furthermore, coverage for health care services is not synonymous with access to services. In many medically underserved areas, the safety net providers will remain the sole point of access for many of Maryland's most disadvantaged residents.

However, many of these providers do not have the administrative and technical systems necessary to effectively and efficiently respond to the changing coverage environment. To ensure their continued viability, the State recognizes the need to provide assistance. House Bill 450 provides a mechanism to assess what assistance is required and develop a plan to effectively partner with these safety net providers to assure their continued viability. House Bill 450 reaffirms Maryland's commitment to the safety net providers and the individuals they serve. MACHC urges a favorable report on House Bill 450.

**For More Information Call:**

Joseph A. Schwartz, III  
Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
(410) 269 - 1618