

STATE OF MARYLAND



Andrew N. Pollak
CHAIR

Ben Steffen
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MARYLAND HEALTH CARE COMMISSION

4160 PATTERSON AVENUE – BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21215
TELEPHONE: 410-764-3460 FAX: 410-358-1236

February 20, 2020

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 970 – Health Insurance - Reimbursement of Primary Care Providers - Bonus Payments - Applicability - INFORMATION

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

The Maryland Health Care Commission (Commission) would like to provide the House Health and Government Operations Committee with information related to House Bill 970 (HB 970). HB 970 requires health insurance carriers to pay bonus payments to primary care providers who provide services outside of normal business hours in non-hospital settings.

This policy was a recommendation of the Task Force on Health Care Access and Reimbursement in 2010. The Task Force recommended that insurance carriers and health plans provide a bonus payment when primary care providers (including physicians or nurses) provide scheduled or unscheduled care after hours. The Task Force also encouraged increased use of telehealth. The Task Force thought that lack of availability of after-hours primary care services and telehealth services was a likely contributor to overutilization of emergency departments at hospitals.

Over the last decade, value-based payment reforms, including the Maryland Primary Care Program, have encouraged expansion of access to care outside of business hours. At the same time, the urgent care and retail clinic markets have grown, providing patients with more options for primary care services. At the same time, this growth raises concerns about continuity of care, as patients seek convenience rather than sustained relationships with a primary care provider. While bonus payments to primary care providers for expanded hours remains a good idea, today

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many better approaches exist to increase provider accountability and increase access to care. For example, the Maryland Primary Care Program (MDPCP) was established in 2019 to further the delivery of all six quality domains of the national quality strategy, including patient safety, effective clinical care, person and caregiver-centered experience and outcomes, communication and care coordination, community/population health, and efficiency and cost reduction.

I hope you find this information useful. Please feel free to contact me at (410) 764-3566 or Ben.Steffen@maryland.gov, or Megan Renfrew, Government Affairs and Special Projects, at (410) 764-3483 or Megan.Renfrew@maryland.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Ben Steffen
Executive Director
Maryland Health Care Commission

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