



Date: Feb. 7th, 2024

To: Chair Pena Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and Members of HGO

Reference: House Bill 51-Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund-Modifications

Position: Favorable with Amendments to include representation for LifeBridge Health-Clinical Expert from Sinai Hospital and focus the fund on pediatric oncology research.

Dear Chair Pena Melnyk and Health and Government Operations Committee Members,

On behalf of LifeBridge Health, we appreciate the opportunity to comment and offer our support for the sponsor offered amendments for HB51. LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, an independent academic medical center. Accredited by the Commission on Cancer as an Integrated Network Cancer Program, the LifeBridge Oncology service line model offers advanced diagnostic and treatment services for many types of cancer, including addressing survivorship. Our oncology's team-based care approach means that each patient is cared for by an assigned Physician Oncologist, Nurse Practitioner, and a Nurse Navigator. Advanced treatment technologies include Brachytherapy, IMRT, Radioablative Therapy, Radioembolization Therapy, Stereotactic Radiation and TrueBeam™. Services at Sinai Hospital include Medical Oncology, Orthopedic Oncology, **Pediatric Oncology**, Radiation Oncology, Outpatient Infusion Services, and Breast Care Services. Sinai's programs bring experts with multiple disciplines including pediatric oncology clinical experience.

In 2022, the General Assembly lead by this Committee's leadership passed legislation to establish the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund within MDH. The fund is authorized only to provide grants for eligible physicians, hospitals, laboratories, educational institutions, and other organizations and persons to conduct pediatric cancer research, prevention, and treatment. Expenditures from the fund must be made in accordance with the State budget, and money expended from the fund is supplemental to and not intended to take the place of funding otherwise appropriated to pediatric cancer research, prevention, and treatment.

The intended purpose of the fund was to fund pediatric cancer research, but not prevention and treatment for specific purposes. Although prevention and treatment are critical aspects of the continuum of care, pediatric research has traditionally been significantly underfunded. Given the limited funding for this program, it would be very challenging to include prevention and treatment as well. There are other sources of reimbursement/funding for those activities. Cancer continues to be the leading disease cause of death of children in Maryland, and across the US. There is a desperate need for research to develop new treatments for children with cancer, and states play a huge role in making this possible.

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LifeBridge Health supports the amendments to Maryland's Pediatric Cancer Fund Act specifically, in support of updating the program funding to focus solely on research and having at least three diverse number of pediatric oncology clinicians to be represented on the Commission to assist in review and distribution of worthy future research proposals.

For all the above stated reasons, we request a Favorable report with sponsor amendments for HB-51.

For more information, please contact:

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