



March 13, 2008

Delegate Peter Hammen, Chairman
Delegate Shane Pendergrass, Vice Chairman
House Health & Government Operations (HGO) Committee
241 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 1391—Support

Dear Chairman Hammen and Vice Chairman Pendergrass:

Children's National Medical Center (Children's National) supports HB 1391, the "Kids First Act." Children's National commends Delegate Heather Mizeur for her outstanding leadership in introducing legislation to achieve universal health care coverage for Maryland's children.

Located just three miles from the Maryland border, Children's National annually devotes nearly 60 percent of our inpatient care to children from Maryland. At Children's National, we take very seriously our role as a critical pediatric health care safety net for Maryland's children and families. In hospital Fiscal Year 2007, nearly 50 percent of our total Medicaid inpatient care was devoted to children from Maryland, and 42 percent of our total Maryland admissions were Medicaid recipients.

According to 2007 data from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of Children's Hospitals, nearly 10 percent, or more than 143,000 Maryland children, are uninsured. More than 75 percent of these children are currently eligible for either Medicaid or the Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP), but remain unenrolled. Our experience caring for both insured and uninsured children finds that children who lack health insurance are generally sicker and are more likely to incur higher health care costs from lack of access to timely preventive care.

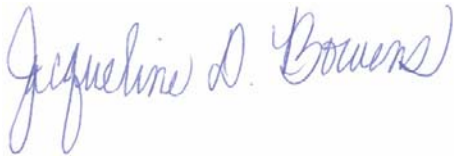
Children's National supports HB 1391 for its creative and multi-faceted approach to identifying program-eligible children and getting them enrolled. Delegate Mizeur clearly understands the key to enrolling eligible children in Medicaid or MCHP is to first identify who they are, and second to get the information in the hands of their parents. What may seem simple on the surface is actually quite difficult. Utilizing an existing government structure and engaging the Maryland Comptroller to identify families who do not have

healthcare coverage for their children is a common sense and cost effective approach to enrolling Medicaid and MCHP-eligible children.

In addition, Children's National applauds Delegate Mizeur for including language directing state agencies to study several options and develop recommendations for making health coverage more affordable and available to children in families earning above 300% of the federal poverty level. These options include an MCHP buy-in program and private sector solutions.

On behalf of Children's National Medical Center – including our physicians, nurses, staff and volunteers – thank you for making health care for Maryland's children a priority. We are proud to serve Maryland's children and look forward to working with you to ensure every child has health coverage and access to affordable, high quality health care.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline D. Bowens
Vice President and Chief
Government & External Affairs Officer
Children's National Medical Center

CC: Members of the House HGO Committee
Delegate Mizeur