



Health Care for All!

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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 574
February 26, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, the Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative and the Health Care For All! Coalition strongly support Delegate Jim Hubbard's HB 574, the Evidence-Based Prescriber Education and Outreach Program Act. First, we commend this Committee for all your great work on health care expansion over the past couple of years that has resulted in tens of thousands of uninsured Marylanders getting the health care coverage they need. We believe that Del. Hubbard's bill is another important step to build on your past success to ultimately achieve our common goal of making quality, health care affordable to all.

Over the years, we have held public forums across Maryland on the health care issue, and at everyone people talk about the problems they have with their prescription drug needs. We believe that Del. Hubbard's bill can help doctors prescribe prescription drugs that are more affordable and of better quality.

We believe academic detailing can improve patient safety and reduce health care costs in Maryland. The pharmaceutical industry spends over an estimated \$12 billion on the promoting and marketing of prescription drugs, with free samples and salespeople in physicians offices accounting for over three quarters of those costs. The issue of the industry's influence on prescribing is becoming more significant:

- Prescription drug costs in the U.S. continue to escalate;
- Drug safety issues and controversies are more frequently raised over new drugs; and
- Safe and effective lower-cost generics are entering the market and can be helpful in reducing overall health care costs.

Also referred to as "counter detailing", academic detailing programs provide objective information on prescription drugs based on the best available evidence-based science. The evidenced-based information is used to counter the pharmaceutical industry's detailing strategy which uses salespeople, rather than clinicians to promote its products. These salespeople, also referred to as pharmaceutical reps, use marketing strategies, rather than science, to promote their company's drugs - even if those drugs are less effective and more expensive than other drugs available.

Attached for the Committee is a recent article in Governing Magazine which describes how academic detailing provides the information doctors need to prescribe high quality, low cost prescription drugs in a way that also can also save the state money. Several states, including Pennsylvania, have put these programs in place and they are working effectively. We urge you to enact HB 574 so that Marylanders can also get these important benefits.