



REPORT FROM STATE CIRCLE
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EDUCATION

Funding

SB 885 Education Funding and Formulas – Amendment – Supermajority Vote (Conway) would require that any changes to education funding formulas would have to be passed by a three fifths vote of both the full Appropriations Committee and the full Budget and Taxation Committee and then passed by the General Assembly. The same supermajority would be required to divert Education Trust Fund money from gambling to other general or special funds. B&T

The formula changes for the coming fiscal year are contained in the **HB 72/SB 57 Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2015 (BRFA)**. These spending committees are beginning to make decisions on the BRFA and budget bills this week.

Curriculum and Accountability

HB 452/SB 497 Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing in Public Schools (Ebersole plus 38/Pinsky plus 29) A 19-member commission would review Maryland’s testing program and report findings to the state and local boards of education by June 2016. Members are to consider time spent on assessments, the purpose of each assessment and whether they are duplicative, a statewide approach to administering assessments, balance between time spent on instruction and testing, scheduling, negative effects on school resources and implications of more flexibility if allowed in new Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) regulations. The commission must make recommendations for improving the testing process while retaining the ability to compare student achievement across district and government lines. Hrg 2/26 W&M; Hrg 3/4 EHEA.

SB 677/HB 1069 Education - Professional Development for Teachers and Providers of Early Childhood Education - Master Plan (Ferguson/Rosenberg and Kaiser) requires the Maryland State Department of Education and

the Maryland Higher Education Commission to develop a master plan to address the shortage of qualified early childhood education teachers. The plan must involve bachelor's degree programs, high quality professional development, an early childhood education certificate that recognizes prior experience and ongoing joint training of elementary school staff and early childhood education program staff in schools that receive public preschool funding. The Fiscal Note reported that, according to the Maryland Family Network, annual wages for early childhood professionals range from \$18,096 for center aides to \$38,997 for child care center directors. The average salary for full-time public elementary school teachers for a 10-month year is \$64,248. Hrg 3/4 EHEA; Hrg 3/12 W&M.

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

SB 79/HB 110 Creation of a State Debt Qualified Zone Academy Bonds (QZAB) (RSC 1) Hrg 2/18 B&T; APP

SB 334 The Hunger Free Schools Act of 2015 (RSC 2) Hrg 2/25 EHEA. Passed Senate with amendments requiring school systems which participate in a federal community eligibility program for free lunches to report to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, the House Appropriations Committee and the House Committee on Ways and Means the impact on State aid provided to local school systems for FY2017 to 2020. W&M

SB 363 Great Pre-Schools Tax Credit Program (RSC 2) Unfavorable Report by B&T. Withdrawn.

SB 806/HB 1200 State Board of Education – High School Assessment – Government (RSC 3) Hrg 3/18 EHEA; HRU

HB 1137/SB 699 Primary Education – State Standardized Assessments – Moratorium (RSC 3) HRU; Hrg 3/4 EHEA

Lois Hybl

REDISTRICTING REFORM

SB 814 Congressional Districting Process (Pinsky) would establish a commission for drawing congressional district lines after each census, with four members appointed by the party leaders in the General Assembly. Those four members would be allowed 30 days to choose a fifth member who would serve as the chair. If they were unable to do so, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals would appoint the fifth member. Members of the commission could not be elected or appointed officials in the executive or legislative branch of the federal, state, or local government or hold a political party office. A majority vote of the members would be required to adopt a redistricting plan which would become effective upon filing with the Secretary of State. The provisions of the bill would not take effect, however, until a state with between six and ten seats in Congress, whose legislature is controlled by the party opposite to that which controls the Maryland legislature, has adopted a “nonpartisan districting process.” The bill was initially assigned to SRU and subsequently referred to EHEA. Hrg 3/19 1 p.m.

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

Several bills were the subject of a hearing on March 2 in HRU:

HB 267 - Legislative and Congressional Districting - Standards and Procedures (RSC 2)

HB 427 - Voters' Legislative Redistricting Panel (RSC 3)

HB 428 - Voters' Congressional Districting Panel (RSC 3)

HB 610 - Elections - Study Commission on the Redistricting Process in Maryland (RSC 3)

HB 906 - Legislative and Congressional Districting - Standards and Procedures (RSC 3)

HB 921 - House Legislative Districts - Single Member (RSC 3)

HB 850 - Congressional Districts - Standards and Process (RSC 3) LWVMD supports this legislation.

SB 448 Congressional Districts - Standards and Process (RSC 3) was the subject of a hearing in EHEA on March 5. LWVMD supports this legislation.

LWVMD also supports the Governor's proposal to study redistricting reform.

Ralph Watkins

ELECTIONS

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

HB 43 Election Law – Petitions – Prohibited Actions (RSC 1) received a favorable report from the House Ways and Means Committee, but has not yet been scheduled for a hearing in a Senate committee.

HB 63, the bill to repeal Maryland's participation in the Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote (RSC 1), received an unfavorable report from House Ways and Means Committee.

Two bills looking to change the dates of Early Voting, **HB 141 and HB 218** (RSC 2), received unfavorable reports from the House Ways & Means Committee.

HB 253 Election Law – Voter Registration – Interstate Crosscheck Program (RSC3) received an unfavorable report by the House Ways & Means Committee. LWVMD opposes this legislation.

SB 97, which would require the counting of a ballot cast by a voter who dies after voting but before the canvass, (RSC 2) has passed the Senate (47-0) and been assigned to the House Ways & Means Committee.

SB 204 Election Law – Primary Election Dates in the Presidential Election Year (Conway) would change the date of the presidential primary election from the first Tuesday in April to the second Tuesday in April, as well as making other technical changes to the election schedule, passed the Senate with a few amendments. The bill has been assigned to the House Ways & Means Committee. A cross filed bill, **HB 396**, had a hearing at Ways & Means on February 18, but no action was taken after that hearing.

HB 1064 Election Law – Audit of Election Results (Hixson, et al) requires local boards of election to perform certain tasks before certifying election results, including ballot accounting and reconciliation, as well as a verification of the machine count of votes through a manual count of votes cast. The bill states that if there is a discrepancy between the machine count and the manual count, the manual count will be the official count. Additionally, HB 1064 creates an Election Audit Workgroup, with representatives from SBE, local elections boards, an auditor from Office of Legislative Audits, a representative of the voting system vendor, an attorney with experience in election law, an academic statistician, and a representative of an election reform advocacy group. The Workgroup is charged with recommending regulations for auditing election results and overseeing a pilot project for auditing the results of the 2016 Presidential primary election. The Workgroup's final report is due June 30, 2017. LWVMD supports this legislation.

Lu Pierson

BUDGET

HB 70/SB 55 Budget Bill (Fiscal Year 2016) was introduced on January 23rd. On February 4, Governor Hogan submitted a supplemental budget in the form of an amendment to HB 70/ SB55. This amendment would authorize an additional \$25 million appropriation from the Transportation Trust Fund to provide an additional \$2 million for Baltimore City, \$4 million to county governments and \$19 million to municipal governments to spend on transportation. The allocation to the county and municipal government will be distributed based on the formulas in current law.

Between now and the end of session, subcommittees of the House Appropriations and Senate Budget and Tax

committees will be reviewing the budget looking for additional reductions to use to convince the governor to make additional allocations to areas such as education in a supplemental budget. The Appropriation subcommittees are: Capital Budget, Education and Economic Development, Health and Human Resources, Public Safety and Administration and Transportation and the Environment. The Budget and Taxation subcommittees are: Capital Budget, Education, Business and Administration, Health and Human Services, Pensions, and Public Safety, Transportation and Environment.

SB 660 The Budget (Madaleno, Guzzone and Manno) would amend the constitution to give more authority to the General Assembly in the budget process. Currently the General Assembly is prohibited from increasing any budget item or adding any new appropriation to the Governor's budget for executive branch agencies, such as the Department of Education, the Department of Environment, Department of Human Resources and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. If this bill were to pass, and is approved by the voters at the next general election, the General Assembly could increase allocations to state agencies as long as the total appropriation does not exceed the total allowance submitted by the Governor. In other words, they could move money around but not add to the total. The Governor would have the authority to veto any increase, however, the presiding officers could convene a special session (called an Extraordinary Session) within 30 days after the Governor's action to consider an override of the Governor's veto. An extraordinary session is limited solely to budget vetoes.

In Maryland, the Governor has more power in the budget process than in any other state. This legislation has been introduced in prior sessions by both Democrats and Republicans but has failed to get out of committee. The League supports increasing the budgetary authority of the legislature to achieve a more effective budget process. Hrg 3/12 B&T.

Nancy Soreng

TAXES

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

SB 73/HB 221 Commission on Tax Policy, Reform, and Fairness (RSC 2) Hrg 2/24 W&M; Hrg 2/24 B&T:
Unfavorable Report

SB 389/HB 240 State Individual Income Tax - Rate Changes (RSC 3) Hrg 3/11 B&T

SB 589/HB 483 Motorist Tax Relief - Motor Fuel Tax - Consumer Price Index and Sales and Use Tax Equivalent Rate Adjustments - Repeal (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 B&T

SB 763/HB 1233 Tax Amnesty Program (RSC 3) Hrg 3/4 B&T

HB 108/SB 37 Tobacco Taxes - Healthy Maryland Initiative (RSC1) Hrg 2/24 W&M, ECM

HB 484/SB 591 Transportation - Highway User Revenues - Phased Restoration (RSC 3) Hrg 3/6 ET

HB 730 Maryland Estate Tax - Unified Credit (RSC 3) Hrg 3/3 W&M

HB 837 Transportation - Motor Fuel Tax and Highway User Revenue - Increased Local Share (RSC 3) Hrg 3/6 ET

HB 899 Motor Fuel Tax - Distribution of Revenue - Local Governments (RSC 3) Hrg 3/6 ET

HB 1003 Motor Fuel Tax - Distribution of Revenue (RSC 3) Hrg 3/6 ET

HB 1065/SB 190 Sales and Use Tax - Taxable Price - Accommodations (RSC 3) Hrg 2/11 B&T Hrg 3/11 W&M

HJ 4 Moratorium on Taxes and Regulations (RSC 3) Hrg 3/9 HRU

Doreen Rosenthal

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

SB 823 Election Laws - Loans to a Campaign Finance Entity (Bates) would strengthen the law that defines loans (versus contributions) to a candidate's campaign fund by adding language that any loan to a candidate for their campaign must be repaid no later than the end of the second year of the election cycle immediately following the election cycle for which the loan was made. This law also states that if the loan is not repaid within the time-frame specified by this legislation a penalty may be assessed against the lender, the candidate's campaign fund or both. Hrg 3/19 EHEA

Correction from RSC 3:

When reporting on **HB 573/SB 518 Fair Elections Act**, I wrote that this legislation would provide public financing for all state-wide offices. That is incorrect. It would apply only to candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

Nancy Soreng

TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT

HB 1073 Environment - Crude Oil Rail Transport - Risk Assessment and Accident Prevention Study (Lam plus 17) requires potential risk and impact studies to determine the impact of a crude oil spill during a rail transport in the state, and requires full disclosure of the amount, route and frequency of crude oil that is transported by rail in the state. To fail to inform government officials about dangerous chemicals traveling through their state prevents these officials and their first responders from developing appropriate plans for providing aid to citizens in the event of emergencies, such as have already happened in other states. The League of Women Voters believes that public records need to be accessible to facilitate informed and active participation in government. This bill would require such disclosure. Hrg 3/11 HGO

SB 879 Open Meetings Act - Requirements for Providing Agendas (Bates) is the expected cross-file with **HB 583**. LWVMD supports these bills.

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

SB 695/HB 755 (RSC 2 & 3) LWVMD has provided testimony in support of **SB 695** to EHEA.

Barbara Schnackenberg

ENVIRONMENT: HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

Marcellus Shale Hydraulic Fracturing

SB 29 Environment – Hydraulic Fracturing – Prohibitions (RSC 1) Hrg 3/3 EHEA

HB 449/SB 409 Protect Our Health and Communities Act (RSC 3) Hrg 3/11, 1 p.m. ENV; Hrg 3/03 EHEA
The LWVMD supports this legislation to give sufficient time to assess the full impacts of fracking on public health and safety. No permits could be issued until 2023 after the completion of a review by a panel of health experts and others in 2022. The League submitted written testimony in support of these bills.

HB 883/SB 438 Environment – Well Drilling- Notice to Municipalities (RSC 3) Hrg 3/11, 1 p.m. ENV; Hrg 2/24 EHEA

SB 458 Civil Actions - Hydraulic Fracturing Liability Act (RSC 3) Hrg 2/25 JPR

HB 458 Environment – Exploration and Production Waste and Waste From Hydraulic Fracturing (RSC 3) Hrg 3/11, 1 p.m. ENV

HB 952 Public Health – Hydraulic Fracturing Chemicals – Information and Fund (RSC 3) Hrg 3/11, 1 p.m. ENV

SB 712 Natural Gas Severance Tax and Impact Account (RSC 3) Hrg 3/11, 1 p.m. B&T

Betsy Singer

ENVIRONMENT: STORM WATER, POLLUTION & THE BAY

HB 341/SB 401 Underground Utility Damage Prevention - Connecting Buildings to Water Supply Systems and Sewerage Systems - Detectable Wires – New or replacement pipes for water or sewer must be buried with or contain traceable copper wires to make the pipes detectable. Hrg 2/19 RCM; in the Senate - third reading, passed (47-0).

HB 886/SB 053 Bay Tax Equity Act (Moon plus 9/Madaleno plus 5) sets up a pollution fee for chicken manure, to be paid by poultry integrators, with the revenue going to the Maryland Agriculture Water Quality Cost Share Program. Hrg 3/13, 1 p.m. E&T; Hrg 3/13, 1 p.m. EHEA

HB 1043/SB Environment – On-Site Sewage Disposal System – Nitrogen Removal Technology – Exemption (Parrott plus 8) exempts on-site sewage disposal systems from having to use nitrogen removal technology if they are located outside the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area. Hrg 3/11, 1 p.m. E&T. LWVMD opposes this legislation.

HB1158 Lead Risk Reduction Standards - Maintenance of Exemptions (Stein) specifies a certification process for owners of rental properties to be exempt from lead-based paint risk reduction standards and sets a 2020 date for multifamily dwelling rental properties when they can no longer be exempt, unless passing a special inspection process. HRU

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

HB 216/SB 200 Environment – Personal Care Products Containing Synthetic Plastic Microbeads – Prohibition on Manufacturing or Sale. Favorable with Amendments EHEA

HB 381/SB 257 Agriculture – Nutrient Management – Phosphorus Management Tool (RSC 2 & 3) LWVMD supports this legislation.

HB 514/SB 258 Maryland Commission on Climate Change (RSC 2 & 3) Hrg 2/25 ET. Passed second reading in the Senate with amendments. LWVMD supports this legislation.

HB 481/SB 588 Stormwater Management – Watershed Protection and Restoration Program – Repeal -- Also **SB36, SB 42, and HB 874** (RSC 1&3) Both House bills, unfavorable report by E&T. LWVMD opposes this legislation.

HB 605/SB 163 Agriculture – Neonicotinoid Pesticide – Labeling Requirement (Pollinator Protection Act of 2015) (RSC 2&3) Hrg 3/13, 1 p.m. ET; Hrg 2/24 EHEA. LWVMD supports this legislation.

HB 701/SB 463 Agriculture – Cattle, Swine, and Poultry – Use of Antimicrobial Drugs (RSC 3) Hrg 3/13, 1 p.m. E&T; Hrg 3/3 EHEA

HB 860 Aquatic Invasive Species – Inspection and Decontamination of Vessels (State Lakes Invasive Species Act of 2015) (RSC 3) Hrg 3/6 ET

SB 470 Agriculture – Antibiotic Drug Usage – Food-Producing (RSC 3) Hrg 3/13, 1 p.m. ET; Hrg 3/3 EHEA

HB 1042 Environment – Nitrogen Oxide Emissions – Pollution and Combustion Control Technologies (the “Healthy Air Act for All”) (RSC 3) Hrg 3/12, 1 p.m. ECM Sen. Nathan-Pulliam has submitted late a similar senate bill. It is now in SRU; if released, it would go next to FIN. LWVMD supports this legislation.

Linda Silversmith

TRANSPORTATION

HB 1231/SB 868 Public Utilities – Transportation Network Services (Waldstreicher, et al./Ferguson) addresses the use of ride services such as Lyft and Uber, and provides a legal framework for them to operate in Maryland. It includes provisions for vehicle safety inspection, driver background check, registering with the Public Service Commission, fare information disclosure, receipts, insurance requirements, and website accessibility. R&E; Hrg 3/24 FIN

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

SB44 Vehicle Laws - Maximum Speed Limits on Highways (RSC 1 & 3) was cross-filed as **HB194**, passed Senate and House.

HB 808/SB 98 Vehicle Laws – Operation of Vehicle When Approaching a Service Vehicle (RSC 3) Hrg cancelled, SB 98 unfavorable JPR

SB 778/HB 172 Task Force to Study Issues Related to the Use of Self-Driving Vehicles (RSC 3) HB172 passed, referred to JPR, Hrg 3/24

Barbara Ditzler

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

HB 1071 Circuit Court Judges - Election, Qualifications, and Term of Office (Hill, et al.) An amendment to the Constitution that requires the Governor to fill a vacancy on an appellate or a Circuit Court by appointment, followed by a retention election after one year or at the end of a 10 year term. Circuit Court judges' names would appear on the ballot within their jurisdiction without opposition. Hrg 3/18 JUD, W&M

HB 1257 Orphans' Court – Change of Name to Probate Court (Bromwell) changes the name of “Orphans' Court” to “Probate Court.” HRU

SB 847 Judges – Mandatory Retirement Age (Miller & Jennings) A Constitutional Amendment increasing the mandatory retirement for judges from 70 to 75 years. Hrg 3/17, 1 p.m. JPR

HB 303/SB 111 Inmates – Life Imprisonment - Parole Reform (Carter, et al/McFadden, et al.) eliminates the requirement that the Governor must approve parole recommended by the Maryland Parole Commission for a person serving a parole-eligible life sentence. Hrg 2/20, 1 p.m. JUD; Hrg 2/19, 1 p.m. JPR

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

HB 111/SB 332 Judgeships – Circuit Courts and District Courts (RSC 3) Floor action postponed until 3/3.

Marlene Cohn

GUN CONTROL**Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:**

SB 261/HB 189 Public Safety - Handgun Permit Background Investigation - Armored Car Company Employees (RSC 2) Hrg 3/12 JPR

SB 454/HB 464 Handgun Permits - Reciprocity (RSC 3) Hrg 3/12 JPR

SB 781 Public Safety - Handgun Permit - Temporary Training Waiver (RSC 3) Hrg 3/24 JPR

HB 25 Public Safety - Assault Weapons - Replacements (RSC 1) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 39 Public Safety - Handgun Identification Requirements - Repeal (RSC 1) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 189/SB 261 Public Safety - Handgun Permit Background Investigation - Armored Car Company Employees (RSC 2) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 432 Public Safety - Handgun Permit - Applicant Qualifications (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 464/SB 454 Handgun Permits - Reciprocity (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 735 Public Safety - Regulated Firearms and Ammunition - Transport Through State (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 743 Handgun Permits - Firearms Training Course - Renewal Application (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 767/SB 100 Public Safety - Permit to Carry, Wear, or Transport a Handgun - Qualifications (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 772 Public Safety - Firearms Safety Training Course - Repeal (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JUD

HB 1024 Public Safety - Renewal of Handgun Permits - Fingerprinting (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JUD

Doreen Rosenthal

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

HB 1983/SB 550 Child Custody – Legal Decision Making and Parenting Time (Dumais/Lee) results from the work of the Commission on Child Custody and Decision-Making. It will change numerous references in the Code from “child custody” and “visitation” to “legal decision making” and “parenting time”. It adds a new subtitle that specifies numerous factors for judicial consideration in cases involving legal decision making and parental responsibility. The purposes of these provisions include (1) promoting stability and long term health and welfare for children, (2) providing children with physical and emotional security and protection from exposure to conflict and violence, and (3) providing for an expeditious, thoughtful, and consistent process for decision making by courts to protect the best interests of children. Hrg 3/5 JUD; Hrg 3/3 JPR

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

HB 163 Child Support – Adjusted Annual Income – Multifamily Adjustment (RSC 2) favorable report by JUD.

HB 171 Courts – Child Abuse and Neglect – Waiver of Reunification Efforts (RSC 2) passed 3rd reading in the House (133-2).

HB 439 Family Law – Information and Services for Foster Children and Former Foster Children (RSC 3) passed 3rd reading in the House (137-0), 1st reading JPR.

HB 643/SB 567 Department of Human Resources – State Child Welfare System – Report (RSC 3) DLS Analysis says that DHR can handle the bill’s requirements using existing resources.

HB 1022/SB 609 State Government – Office of the Child Welfare Ombudsman – Establishment (RSC 3) DLS Analysis projects costs rising from \$507,900 for FY 16 to \$1,355,700 in FY 2020.

SB 524 Family Law – Protecting the Resources of Children in State Custody (RSC 3) passed 3rd reading in the Senate (47-0), 1st reading JUD.

SB 685 Family Law – Information and Services for Foster Children and Former Foster Children (RSC 3) favorable with amendments report JPR.

There has been no change in the status of the other bills reported in RSC 1, 2, & 3.

Judy Morenoff

MEETING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

Housing and Community Development

HB 1195/SB 877 Fair Foreclosure Act of 2015 (B. Robinson/Benson) establishes a required procedure for foreclosing on residential property that includes filing a complaint, specific information to be provided to the resident about the foreclosure, and a required period of time after the notice & complaint before foreclosure can occur.

Other

HB 456/SB 521 Workgroup to Study Safe Harbor Policy for Youth Victims of Human Trafficking (Morales/Lee) Safe harbor laws are intended to address the inconsistent treatment of children, raise awareness about children that have been commercially sexually exploited, and ensure that these victims are provided with services rather than a criminal conviction. This bill establishes a workgroup to study safe harbor policies for youth victims of human trafficking. Hrg 3/3 W&M. LWVMD supports these bills.

SB 520 Criminal Law – Human Trafficking- Affirmative Defense (Lee) This bill will allow being a victim of human trafficking as an affirmative defense against a charge of prostitution. Hrg 3/4 JPR. LWVMD supports this bill.

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

HB 420 Commission on Rental Housing Stabilization (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 ET. LWVMD supports this bill.

HB 500 Sustainable Communities Tax Credit (RSC 3) Hrg 3/13 W&M

HB 824 Real Property – Landlord & Tenant – Residential Leases & Just Cause Evictions (RSC 3) Hrg 3/3 ET

HB 1051 Labor & Employment – Equal Pay for Equal Work (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 ECM. LWVMD supports this bill.

SB 424 Labor & Employment – Equal Pay for Equal Work (RSC 3) Hrg 3/5 FIN. LWVMD supports the bill.

SB 480 Commission on Rental Housing Stabilization (RSC 3) Hrg 3/5 JPR. LWVMD supports the bill.

SB 676/HB 1021 Richard E. Israel & Roger ‘Pip’ Moyer Death with Dignity Act (RSC 3) Hrg 3/10 JPR

Ruth Crystal

HEALTH

The Supreme Court heard King vs. Burwell on March 4. The case focuses on one small aspect of the Affordable Care Act, but it could ditch the entire program for many people. Both sides of the ongoing debate over the ACA agree that the wording was a typo or “glitch” in the drafting of the ACA, but it has landed the case in the Supreme Court. The wording is said to withhold subsidies in states that used the federal exchange. It appears that Justice Kennedy could be the swing vote on this issue. Only 11 states formed their own exchanges, leaving 34 states affected by the case. Maryland is not affected by the case.

The Maryland Women’s Coalition for Health Care Reform is supporting several bills that should be of interest to League

members. **HB 375/SB 403, Maryland Council on Advancement of School – Based Health Centers**, (Cullison/Maldenaro) repeals the original advisory board on school health clinics and establishes a new board with a broader mission. It has been heard in Health and Government Operations (HGO) and in Education, Health and Environmental Matters (EHEA) but there have been no votes in either committee.

HB 650/SB 281 Blue Ribbon Commission to Study Maryland’s Behavioral Health System (Pene-Melnyk/Middleton) will establish a commission to study the entire mental health system in Maryland, including types of illnesses, depth of the physicians and other providers seeing patients in the state, and even the degree of parity in the reimbursement system. Hrg 3/10 HGO; Hrg 2/25 FIN

The Coalition is also supporting **HB 739/SB 74 Task Force to Study Maternal Mental Health** (Kelly/Feldman, et. al) which has already passed out of HGO and has passed the Senate on third reader. It sets up a separate commission to study maternal mental health and the system needs in the state.

SB 399 Health Care Malpractice Claims – Use of Clinical Practice Guidelines (Pugh and Muse) would require the Health Department to determine clinical guidelines that would have to be followed by physicians. An independent medical review panel within the Department would determine if a physician followed the guidelines, and the conclusions could be used against them in a malpractice case. The medical community is opposed to the bill, because they feel that the special societies have already developed such guidelines and guidelines often do not pertain to individual emergencies. Additionally, the current guidelines are already used by the plaintiffs’ attorneys to prove a malpractice case.

SB 479 Civil Actions – Noneconomic Damages – Catastrophic Injury (Ramirez, et al) (SB 789, 2014) was heard in Judicial Proceedings on February 25. This is the trial bar’s perennial effort to raise the cap on Noneconomic Damages, which are currently limited to \$755,000 and will rise automatically on October 1, 2015. The bill would triple the current cap and would broaden the definition for catastrophic injury to likely capture the majority of malpractice cases. There are no limits in the state on actual damages (known as pain and suffering.)

Updates on Bills Previously Reported in RSC:

SB 723 Nurse Practitioner Full Practice Authority Act of 2015 (RSC 3) now has a cross-filed bill, **HB 0999**, (Cullison, et.al) and would allow a nurse practitioner to practice in Maryland without a collaborative agreement with a physician. EHEA; HGO

HB 181/SB 69 State Board of Pharmacy – Sterile Compounding - Compliance by Nonresident Pharmacies and Repeal of Permit Requirement (Hill/Conway) (RSC 3) passed the House with amendments and is back in EHEA.

SB 599 Public Health – Expedited Partner Therapy for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea (RSC 3) passed second reader in the Senate.

Neilson Andrews