



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – John M. Colmers, Secretary

May 5, 2010

The Honorable Peter A. Hammen
Chair
Health and Governmental Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Joan Carter-Conway
Chair
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Hammen and Chairwoman Carter-Conway:

The Statewide Advisory Commission on Immunizations (the Commission) is required to submit an annual report under Health-General Article §18-214(i) and in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, to the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee and the Health and Government Operations Committee on or before December 15th of each year. We apologize for the delay in sending a report to your committees this year.

As you may know, during legislative session 2010, HB 411 - Statewide Advisory Commission on Immunizations - Membership, Duties, and Sunset Repeal, was passed. This bill repeals the May 31, 2010 termination date for the Statewide Advisory Commission on Immunizations, and adds a consumer member and a pharmacist to the commission. Instead of the MedChi physician on the commission acting as the chair, the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, in consultation with MedChi, must appoint the chair of the commission. In addition, the term of a commission member is set at three years. The commission's charge is also adjusted to (1) require the commission to study and make recommendations about immunizations required of children entering schools at



Chairman Hammen
Chairwoman Carter-Conway
May 5, 2010
Page Two

any time, not just in the times of vaccine shortages; (2) make recommendations regarding a public education campaign in the event of a public health emergency involving immunizations; (3) assess the availability and affordability of adolescent vaccines; and (4) review additional information regarding immunizations. The bill takes effect June 1, 2010. Our Departmental legislation, HB 532, was folded into HB 411 with our support and we look forward to the implementation of this bill, once it is signed by Governor O'Malley.

On behalf of the Commission, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) would like to provide an update on the status of the Commission. Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, former Commissioner of the Baltimore City Health Department, served as the Chair of this Commission, until leaving the position in March 2009 when he joined the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Since then, the Commission has not had any meetings. However, in the early stages of the 2009 pandemic influenza, the Commission participated in conference calls on H1N1 response planning and provided initial guidance to DHMH on H1N1 vaccination strategies.

The DHMH, in consultation with MedChi, is in the process of identifying a new Chair for this Commission.

The following is a list of activities conducted by the Commission in 2008:

- On August 11, the Commission sent a letter to DHMH in support of the Maryland Partnership for Prevention's Maryland Healthcare Worker Influenza Initiative, asking DHMH to urge all healthcare facilities in the state to immunize employees against the influenza virus.
- On August 26, the Commission wrote to Governor Martin O'Malley urging the state to end the exclusion of influenza vaccine health insurance coverage for state employees and their families.
- On August 27, the Commission wrote to Maryland federal legislators, urging them to support the shift of all preventive adult vaccine into Medicare Part B, rather than Medicare Part D, making vaccination more practical for Maryland's seniors.
- Based on recommendations from Dr. Nicole Lurie of the RAND Corporation, the Commission wrote to DHMH proposing that they conduct a flu season mid-course assessment.

Chairman Hammen
Chairwoman Carter-Conway
May 5, 2010
Page Three

I will notify you when a new Chair has been appointed by the Secretary of DHMH. If you have any questions, please call Mr. Greg Reed, Program Manager, IDEHA Center for Immunization and lead staff to the Commission at 410-767-6679.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frances Phillips", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Frances Phillips
Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services

Attachment: The Statewide Advisory Commission on Immunizations Report, 2008

cc: John M. Colmers
Heather Hauck
Wynee Hawk
David Blythe
John Krick
Greg Reed
Sarah Albert