



## PHYSICIAN WORKFORCE — MAKE MARYLAND DOCTOR-FRIENDLY

### THE ISSUE

A 2008 study by the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA) and the Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi) revealed shortages of primary care and emergency department doctors in Maryland, with acute shortages in the state's rural regions. Surgical specialty physicians were also found to be in short supply. The study showed that Maryland has 16 percent fewer physicians available for clinical practice than the national average, a shortage projected to grow at least until 2015. A recent Maryland Health Care Commission study projects that 13 percent of medical specialty areas will experience a shortage in 2015, including primary care, emergency medicine, and general surgery.

Nationally, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services estimates the number of physicians will increase by only 7 percent by 2020, even as the number of Americans who need care the most, those 65 and older, is projected to increase 36 percent, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

One of Maryland's greatest challenges is keeping doctors in the state who were trained in the state; Maryland ranks 41 out of 50 in the U.S. in retaining these physicians. Adding to the challenge are Maryland's high cost of living, low physician reimbursement, and challenging liability climate. The bottom line: Maryland competes nationally for physicians, physicians nationally are in short supply, and Maryland, therefore, enters the competition at a distinct disadvantage.

### WHAT WE'RE FOR

- **Make Maryland Physician-Friendly** – Enhance the practice environment for Maryland's physicians. These enhancements include improved reimbursement, changes in medical liability, and incentives for residents-in-training to stay in Maryland.
- **Help with Loans** – State and federal officials must implement changes proposed in 2009 to the Physician Loan Assistance Repayment Program; the changes will allow \$13 million in hospital rates to be used to support the program.
- **Improve the Liability Environment** – We oppose attempts to increase the cap on damages in medical malpractice cases. We support strengthening the state's apology statute, which recognizes doctors who take responsibility when something goes wrong. And we support enhanced "Good Samaritan" provisions that make it easier for doctors to volunteer their services without fear of liability.
- **Help Doctors Get Wired** – Providing funding assistance to help physicians implement Electronic Health Records will reduce administrative red tape and, over the long-term, cut costs.