



Maryland Chamber of Commerce

Legislative Position

**SB 638
SUPPORT**

**Finance
Committee**

3/4/09

SB 638

Health Insurance – Bona Fide Wellness Programs

Bill Summary: This bill would expand the ability of health insurance carriers to promote wellness programs, including a limited ability to base the programs on incentives to satisfy a standard that can reasonably promote health.

Chamber Position: The Maryland Chamber of Commerce supports this bill. Many studies indicate that chronic conditions account for a disproportionate amount of health care costs. To the extent that we can get people to lead healthier lifestyles, health care costs and health insurance costs will be reduced.

The General Assembly has already taken steps in 2007 to promote the use of wellness programs, including allowing carriers to offer a premium discount for employers with wellness programs. The small employer health insurance subsidy program enacted during the 2007 special session also requires participating employers to have a wellness program.

This bill is consistent with those earlier enactments by providing that the use of wellness programs to promote health or prevent and control injury do not constitute a discriminatory practice under the state's insurance laws and allowing incentives to satisfy a standard that can reasonably promote health.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for this bill.

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