



## Maternity Coalition Releases Statement Ahead of Legislative Hearing on the Closure of Laurel Regional Hospital

*Committee lawmakers warned by Dimensions Healthcare of reduced obstetrical services nearly two years ago*

For Immediate Release

Contact: Kate Leisner  
info@mdmaternityaccess.org  
386-307-4683

**BALTIMORE, MD (November 19, 2015)** – Today, a coalition aimed at protecting access to maternity care for women across Maryland released a statement ahead of a 1:00pm legislative hearing on the status of Laurel Regional Hospital held by the Maryland House Health & Government Operations Committee. As a result of the recent closure of Laurel Regional’s maternity ward, Prince George’s County now has only one hospital that provides a full-range of obstetrical healthcare services for women.

“We hope that lawmakers will take a serious look at the looming health care crisis that Maryland is now facing as three Maryland hospitals have closed their maternity wards in just three years,” said Beth Laverick, President of the Maryland Maternity Access Coalition. “The continued reduction of obstetrics services throughout the state is a wake-up call for the General Assembly to take action to address the crisis by implementing a No-Fault Birth Injury Fund that would help families and protect access to care.”

“Dimensions’ reduction in obstetrical services is sadly not surprising”, Laverick continued. “Nearly two years ago, Dimensions officials testified before this same committee warning that Maryland’s litigation environment will force a reduction in obstetrical services. The question is: How many more hospital maternity wards must close before our legislators act to protect mothers?”

*“... We are becoming increasingly aware that it will be very difficult to justify continuing an obstetrical program under the current trajectory... If something is not done soon, Dimensions will have to seriously contemplate the fiscal viability of the obstetrical program, and as a result of that, the population we serve, the population who can ill afford to lose service, will*

*experience decreased access to obstetrical care ...”--2014 Dimensions Testimony to the Health & Government Operations Committee of the Maryland General Assembly [Embed link: <http://mgahouse.maryland.gov/mga/play/1c2ea92cd66f4654aad9acb1fb15ca7e/?catalog/03e481c7-8a42-4438-a7da-93ff74bdaa4c&playfrom=8285409>]*

Additionally, the President of Laurel Regional has pointed to financial strains and rising medical liability costs as the reason for the closure, calling Obstetrics a “persistent problem”. Laurel Hospital President John Spearman stated: “the litigation environment and how that impacts the financial viability of hospitals is the exact kind of situation that we're facing here,” according to the [Baltimore Sun](#).

In late 2014, a Department of Health & Mental Hygiene Task Force urged the Maryland General Assembly to pursue the creation of a Birth Injury Fund – paid for by hospitals – to reduce medical liability risk in the field of obstetrics, in order to safeguard women’s access to maternity care ([State panel recommends creation of a birth injury fund](#), Baltimore Sun, 12/24/14).

The proposed fund, similar to ones that have been successfully in operation since the late 1980s in Florida and Virginia, enjoys bi-partisan support from voters across the state. A statewide poll of voters released earlier this year – conducted by OpinionWorks of Annapolis – found that Maryland voters support creating a birth injury fund by a 3-to-1 margin, with 62 percent in favor and only 21 percent opposed. In the poll, voters strongly support the concept of families giving up their right to sue in exchange for being guaranteed an award from the fund if a child suffers a permanent birth injury.

**Information on Today’s Legislative hearing:**

WHAT: House Health Government Operations Committee Hearing on the Prince George’s County Health System

WHERE: Room 240, Health and Government Operations Committee, House Office Building, 6 Bladen St., Annapolis, Maryland

WHEN: Today November 19, 2015 at 1:00pm

The Maryland Maternity Access Coalition is a broad coalition of concerned citizens, organizations, and healthcare providers formed to protect and preserve access to high-quality maternity care for the women of Maryland. For more information on the Maryland Maternity Access Coalition, visit the coalition’s Facebook page and website at [www.facebook.com/mdmaternityaccess](http://www.facebook.com/mdmaternityaccess) and [www.Mdmaternityaccess.org](http://www.Mdmaternityaccess.org).

###