



Maryland
Hospital Association

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Hospitals Working to Protect Kids from Identity Theft

Elkridge, Md. — Maryland’s hospitals are partnering with the Maryland Office of the Attorney General, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and state Delegate Craig Zucker (D-District 14) to encourage parents and guardians of minors to place security freezes on their children’s credit reports.

Del. Zucker first brought attention to the issue during the 2015 General Assembly Session. Hospitals and pediatricians responded quickly to develop a public awareness campaign that will provide information to parents about how to prevent these growing attacks on children (the Interstate Technology & Regulatory Council reports a 300 percent increase in calls related to child identity theft in 2014).

“This is a problem nationally and for Marylanders, and the efforts from all involved to spread awareness about this issue will go a long way toward eliminating it,” Zucker said. “We want to help Maryland’s families take proactive steps to protect their children.”

Nationwide, children are targeted for identity theft 35 times more often than adults, and a 2012 report sponsored by the national Identity Theft Assistance Center found that one in 40 households with children under the age of 18 had at least one child whose personal information was compromised by identity criminals.

In 2012, the Maryland Office of the Attorney General championed legislation that enables Marylanders to preemptively protect their children’s identities. The law, the first of its kind in the nation, allows parents and legal guardians to place a security freeze on their minor child’s credit records that prevents identity thieves from opening credit accounts in the child’s name. (Dozens of other states have since adopted similar legislation aiming to protect children from identity theft.) Put another way, this is a “Do Not Enter” sign on children’s credit records.

“Identity thieves know no age limits; it is a crime of opportunity,” said Attorney General Brian Frosh. “Through this law, parents and guardians can protect children so they can start adulthood with a clean slate.”

Hospitals and pediatricians, because of their close connection with new mothers and babies, will provide information to families about how to initiate these preventive security freezes. All of the state’s hospitals that deliver babies, as well as pediatricians, will have access to printable

information on child security freezes that they can distribute. Also, a new website, www.kidsafemaryland.org, provides details on how to place security freezes in a child's name and offers downloadable files for hospitals, pediatricians and the public to print.

“Hospitals are committed to the health and welfare of all children, from pre-natal care to delivery and afterward, and they are uniquely positioned to help inform families about how to protect their children,” said Maryland Hospital Association President & CEO Carmela Coyle. “Their commitment means caring for all aspects of children’s well-being, including protecting them from financial predators.”

“Families rely on pediatricians as trusted advisors,” said Dr. Scott Krugman, chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at MedStar Franklin Square and immediate past president of the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. “When it comes to children, pediatricians’ goal is to protect them in any way we can; this is one more way to ensure Maryland’s kids are safe.”

About the Maryland Hospital Association

MHA advocates for Maryland’s hospitals, health systems, and patients before legislative and regulatory bodies. Membership is composed of community and teaching hospitals, health systems, specialty and veterans’ hospitals, and long-term care facilities. Visit www.mhaonline.org for more.

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