

changes to, and solicit funds to implement a certain hepatitis C prevention plan; specifying the membership, terms, removal, chairman, and purpose of the Advisory Council; requiring the Advisory Council to issue certain reports on or before certain dates; requiring the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene to take certain actions in connection with the Hepatitis C Advisory Council; defining certain terms; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Hepatitis C Advisory Council.

BY adding to

Article – Health – General

Section 18–1001 through 18–1009, inclusive, to be under the new subtitle  
“Subtitle 10. Hepatitis C Advisory Council”

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2000 Replacement Volume and 2002 Supplement)

#### Preamble

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is a silent killer, being largely asymptomatic until irreversible liver damage may have occurred; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C has been characterized by the World Health Organization as a disease of primary concern to humanity; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C currently infects approximately 4.5 million persons in the United States, and each year there are some 30,000 new infections nationwide; and

WHEREAS, The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that approximately 12,000 persons die annually from the consequences of hepatitis C, and this number continues to grow each year; and

WHEREAS, The disease is considered to be such a public health threat that the United States Department of Health and Human Services has initiated a comprehensive plan to address this significant health problem, beginning with the identification of, and notification to, hundreds of thousands of persons who are inadvertently exposed to hepatitis C through blood transfusions; and

WHEREAS, In the absence of a vaccine for hepatitis C, emphasis must be placed on other means of awareness and prevention of this disease, including, but not limited to, education of persons at high risk for hepatitis C as defined by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as police officers, firefighters, health care workers, and the general public; and

WHEREAS, Educating the public and health care community throughout the State about hepatitis C will ensure an optimal approach to controlling this lethal disease; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows: