FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

STATE SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROCEDURES FOR RECOMMENDING PHYSICIAN VISA WAIVERS

Baltimore, MD (October 10, 2012) – The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) requests informal comments from the public on proposed changes to the state’s procedures for recommending candidate physicians to the U.S. Department of State for J-1 Visa Waivers.

The federal J-1 Visa Waiver Program enables foreign physicians to remain in the U.S. after completing their graduate education, with the recommendation of a state health department, to improve access to primary care and other health services in medically underserved areas.

There is a shortage of primary care physicians, including family practice, internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry and obstetrics and gynecology, in many areas of Maryland. It is Maryland's goal to maximize the number of J-1 Visa Waiver physicians who deliver primary care and work in primary care settings in underserved and rural areas.

Because Maryland is limited to 30 physician recommendations each year, Maryland plans to change its procedures to better align the placement of J-1 Visa Waiver candidates it recommends to the U.S. Department of State with Maryland’s goal to improve access to primary care.

The changes to the procedures are open for review and comment at http://dhmh.maryland.gov/SitePages/Open%20Requests%20for%20Comments.aspx.

For more information on the federal J-1 Visa Waiver Program and the waiver recommendation process in Maryland, visit http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/ohpp/docs/J1-Fact-Sheet.pdf.

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