

BONNIE CULLISON
Legislative District 19
Montgomery County

Health and Government
Operations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 312
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3883 · 301-858-3883
800-492-7122 Ext. 3883
Fax 410-841-3882 · 301-858-3882
Bonnie.Cullison@house.state.md.us

Chair, Insurance and Pharmaceuticals
Subcommittee

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 55
Health Occupations - Nurse Anesthetists - Drug Authority and Collaboration

Good afternoon, Madame Chair, Chairman Pendergrass, Vice Chairman Peña-Melnyk and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present HB 55, **Health Occupations - Nurse Anesthetists - Drug Authority and Collaboration**. First let me say that the Nurse Anesthetists and the Anesthesiologists have worked hard, and in a truly collaborative manner, to reach an agreement on amendments, and ultimately on this legislation.

Nurse Anesthetists work primarily in hospitals, ambulatory care centers and dental practices. They are highly educated and highly trained healthcare professionals who work collaboratively with physicians, anesthesiologists and dentists to deliver anesthesia. In a hospital there is often a “team care model” in which there is one anesthesiologist working with Nurse Anesthetists in four different surgeries simultaneously. Sometimes the Nurse Anesthetist works directly with the physician or surgeon and delivers the anesthesia. Similarly, in ambulatory care and dental offices, they can administer the anesthesia, when no anesthesiologist is present. This care model is over 40 years old and has worked well to the benefit of patients.

Current law provides for Nurse Anesthetists to administer anesthesia, but unfortunately it is silent with respect to medication that is not anesthetics. As my panel will testify, Nurse Anesthetists frequently order and administer a range of non-anesthetic medication. For example, they may need to administer medication to lower a patient's blood pressure during a procedure, or they may need to prescribe anti-nausea medication for a patient on discharge. HB 55 would clarify that Nurse Anesthetists do indeed have that prescriptive authority. This is the case in 27 other states. The Board of Nursing supports this bill.

In collaboration with The Anesthesiologist Society and MedChi, the following amendments we made to the original bill:

- Struck the addition of “podiatrist” as a potentially new collaborating health professional.
- Struck language that allowed Nurse Anesthetists to prescribe medication without collaborating with the physician, anesthesiologists, or dentist, maintaining the requirement for their involvement in the prescription and administration of medications.

Thank you very much for your consideration of HB 55 and I respectfully request your favorable report.