



## MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

*Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy*

February 22, 2023

Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk  
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
Room 241  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

HB 278 - Health Occupations - Clinical Nurse Specialists - **Request a FAVORABLE Report**

Dear Chairwoman Pena-Melnyk and Honorable Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

Maryland is experiencing its worst shortage in healthcare providers ever. The [2022 State of Maryland's Health Care Workforce Report](#), released by the Maryland Hospital Association (MHA), found that there is a workforce crisis in Maryland's healthcare sector. The report detailed that one in four hospital nursing positions are vacant, and also cited high staff turnover and an insufficient nursing pipeline.

Similarly, the [Maryland Hospital Association](#) found that overall **Maryland is 16 percent below** the national average for number of physicians available for clinical practice. **The most severe problems occur in rural parts of the state** and will get much worse by 2025, based on the study's results. The biggest statewide gaps occur in **Primary Care, Emergency Medicine**, Anesthesiology, Hematology/Oncology, Thoracic Surgery and Vascular Surgery, Psychiatry, and Dermatology.

The situation in **Southern Maryland, Western Maryland, and the Eastern Shore** is the most troubling. All three regions fall significantly below national levels in active practicing physicians. Southern Maryland already has critical shortages in 25 of the 30 physician categories (83.3%), Western Maryland 20 of 30 (66.7%), and the Eastern Shore 18 of 30 (60.0%)

HB 278 authorizes a "clinical nurse specialist" (CNS) to "practice as a clinical nurse specialist" for the purpose of prescribing drugs and durable medical equipment (DME), among other things. The bill designates a CNS as an "authorized prescriber" under the Maryland Pharmacy Act. Practice as a CNS is governed by rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Nursing (BON) that concern additional acts in the practice of registered nursing.

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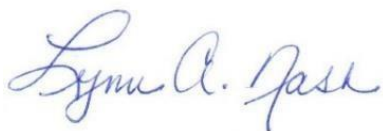
As a Clinical Nurse Specialist, I completed a 4-year Bachelor's degree in nursing and a 3-year Master's degree in Community Health. After several years of experience doing clinical nurse practice, I sat for the American Academy of Nursing's clinical nurse specialist exam in Community Health, a rigorous testing of both clinical practice and the science behind the practice. Some Advance Practice Nurses have completed a DNP, a Doctorate in Nursing Practice which makes them eligible to function as an advance provider, without physician oversight. ***Any nurse who has completed such an academic and practical endeavor should be able to practice independently***, especially when it comes to providing prescriptions needed for medications as well as durable equipment and entry into home care and hospice. I wholeheartedly support such a move to empower nurses who have the appropriate training and have passed their certification exams to practice **within the full range of their scope of practice** – we need them!

Maryland is home to approximately 390,000 veterans, 30,000 active-duty service members and 18,000 reservists/national guard members. In addition, there are 130,000 veteran households with children and another 60,000 reserve/national guard/active-duty dependents. They deserve access to care. Amending this bill as suggested would accomplish that.

The Maryland Military Coalition, is a voluntary, non-partisan organization representing 19 veteran service organizations who, in turn, serve over 150,000 Maryland uniformed services men and women and their families. The Coalition ***strongly supports*** House Bill 278 and asks for your **favorable report**.

Thank you to Delegate Cullison for sponsoring this important legislation.

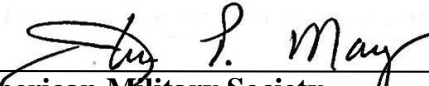
Yours Respectfully,

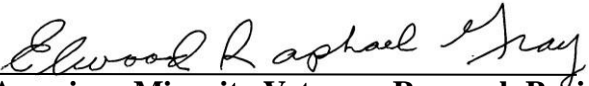
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lynn A. Nash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN  
CAPTAIN (Ret)., U.S. Public Health Service  
Communications Director

## Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

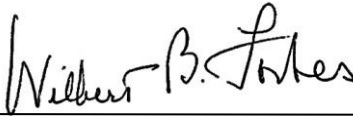
  
Air Force Sergeants Association

  
American Military Society

  
American Minority Veterans Research Project

  
Association of the United States Navy


  
Commissioned Officers Association of the  
US Public Health Service

  
Disabled American Veterans


  
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

  
Fleet Reserve Association

  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

  
Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'  
Association

  
Military Officers Association of America

  
Military Order of the Purple Heart

  
Montford Point Marines of America

  
National Association for Black Veterans

  
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

  
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

  
Reserve Organization of America

  
Society of Military Widows

  
Veterans of Foreign Wars