



Date: February 13, 2020

Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Bill: SB 576 – Health Occupations – Nurse Practitioners – Certifications of Competency and Incapacity

Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

This is a letter in Support with Amendments of Senate Bill 576, requesting inclusion of PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (PAs) as certifying providers.

There are three recognized providers of medical care in Maryland: physicians, physician assistants (PAs) and nurse practitioners (NPs). Senate Bill 576 addresses the determination of competency for assignment of guardianship as well as incapacity when dictating medical care. As proposed, by SB 576, a nurse practitioner will be viewed as a medical provider in the determination of competency or incapacity.

On behalf of the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants, the only organization representing the over 3,000 PAs in the state, we wish to propose that SB 576 also include a PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT in addition to a NURSE PRACTITIONER under these circumstances. PAs are licensed by the Board of Physicians to provide medical care in Maryland in all medical specialties. We examine, diagnose, and treat all manner of illness and injury, including those that may result in cognitive impairment.

Given that a large portion of the residents of the state do not have ready access to medical care, the burden of allowing only physicians to determine competency or incapacity creates unnecessary hurdles. PAs and NPs are often the primary, and sometimes the only, medical provider a patient may be interacting with on a regular basis. There should be no reason to have an extraneous barrier in place that could impair safety by delaying guardianship or result in delay of patient care by blocking assessment of incapacity.

For these reasons we request that both NURSE PRACTITIONERS (NPs) and PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (PAs) are included as providers able to assist in the determination of competency and capacity as proposed by Senate Bill 576.

Respectfully,

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