

SB 576 Nurse Practitioner -- Certificate of Competency and Incapability
February 13, 2020
SUPPORT
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Good Afternoon Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan; I am the Director for Advocacy for AARP Maryland. AARP Maryland has over 900,000 members in Maryland and its members overwhelmingly support **SB 576 Nurse Practitioners--Certificate of Competency and Incapability**. We thank Senator Eckardt for sponsoring this bill.

HB 576 authorizes a nurse practitioner who has examined a disabled person to be one of the two health care practitioners who may sign a certificate of competency for a petition for guardianship of a disabled person. The bill also authorizes a nurse practitioner to be one of the two health care practitioners permitted, under specified circumstances, to certify that a patient is incapable of making an informed decision regarding specified treatment; in a terminal condition or has an end-stage condition; or in a persistent vegetative state.

It is not unreasonable that our members want and expect reliable access to quality health care and they want to know it is a top priority for lawmakers. That is why we continue to support efforts to modernize state nursing laws so as to adopt full practice authority.

With the shortage of Mental Health Providers, the inability of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) and Psychiatric Mental Health (PMH)-APRNs to perform the same evaluations as other providers creates an unnecessary delay in services to those in need of mental health services and increases the total cost of these services.

Further improvements in access to care and a significant reduction in cost could be realized with the addition of APRNs to the list of providers who are eligible to perform:

- Capability/Capacity Evaluations
- Evaluations for a Certificate of Competency: Guardianship of a Disabled Person
- Involuntary Admission Assessments.

AARP Maryland advocates to break down the barriers that prevent nurse practitioners from using all their expertise in caring for patients. These barriers often delay care to consumers, especially in rural and urban undeserved areas where few physicians are available.

The status quo is failing too many Marylanders to be considered a viable option. In light of the evidence, national recommendations, expert health policy and health care endorsements, and the patient and health system benefits, the only question left is: why not take every opportunity to put patients first and remove red tape for Maryland.

AARP believes that high-quality; patient-centered health care for all will require remodeling many aspects of the health care system, especially nursing. Nurses should be able to practice to full extent of their education and training.

AARP members demand policy solutions and legislation that would fully realize nurses' potential contribution to a patient-centered, transformed health care system in the following areas:

- **Removing Barriers to Practice and Care:** Modernize outdated policies (public and private) and change state and federal laws and regulations to allow nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training.
- **Patient-Centered Transformed Health Care System:** Advances and contributions to the research, advocacy and communications strategies through the national network of professional and health care related stakeholders.

For these reasons AARP Maryland respectfully request a favorable report on SB 576. For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan, Director of Advocacy at tbresnahan@arp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.