

Hearing Date: February 16, 2021

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Bill: HB 689 - Certificates for Involuntary Admission – Licensed Certified Social Worker–Clinical

Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

This is a letter in **Support with Amendment of House Bill 689**, requesting inclusion of PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (PAs) as professionals able to sign certificates of involuntary psychiatric admissions.

House Bill 689 is being submitted to add licensed certified social worker-clinical to sign certificates of involuntary psychiatric admissions with a physician. As the legislation is currently written, the certificates may be signed by two physicians of any specialty, a physician and a psychologist, or a physician and a psychiatric nurse practitioner.

In Maryland, physician assistants (PAs) are licensed healthcare providers, who are able to examine, diagnose, and treat diseases, including those related to mental health. PAs are trained in the medical model, just as physicians, and required to complete at least 2,000 hours of supervised clinical experience. A significant number of PAs work in emergency medicine, where the majority of involuntary psychiatric certificates are signed. By not including PAs as a certifying provider, it means that patients often have to wait until a shift change occurs so that a second physician is available to sign. This in turn causes delays in starting searches for an accepting facility and creates unnecessary delays in patient care. Furthermore, with the increasing utilization of telehealth services, by not including PAs as certifying providers, patients' access to psychiatric telehealth evaluations is being inadvertently limited.

These are unintended consequences related to the current language. Please consider this request to **also include PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS (PAs) in House Bill 689** as licensed healthcare professionals able to certify involuntary admissions in addition to licensed certified social workers.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deanna Bridge Najera". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deanna Bridge Najera, MPAS, MS, PA-C, DFAAPA
Physician Assistant and Nationally Certified Counselor
301-639-2070 (cell)
Deanna.Bridge@gmail.com