

SUPPORT

SB513 Health Occupations Clinical Nurse Specialists Prescribing Authority

February 10, 2022

Good afternoon, Mister Chairman and EHEA Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today.

I am offering testimony in support for SB 513.

My name is Lorraine Diana. I am a certified family nurse practitioner and have practiced in Maryland for 41 years.

There are 3 healthcare crises in Maryland. Covid is at the forefront of conversation, as is the critical nursing shortage. The other crisis—equally as grave as Covid—is the opioid crisis.

We have 310 clinical nurse specialists in Maryland. 24.5% of CNSs are in rural areas.

40% of CNSs work in hospital based acute care and outpatient settings, like Sharon and Marianne.

CNSs in hospitals rose to the occasion to provide superior and tireless care to Covid patients but were handicapped by not being able to prescribe medications, rehab care, home health and home medical equipment.

You heard from my colleagues today and how they must rely upon other providers to obtain necessary and sometimes lifesaving prescriptions.

60% or 188 of our CNSs are certified as psyche mental health providers and are located throughout Maryland.

Under the Federal SUPPORT ACT of 2018, CNSs were authorized to prescribe medications to treat opioid use disorder, but Maryland law prohibits CNSs from prescribing.

Since 1991, under COMAR, Psyche mental health CNSs manage therapies including medications for their patients without the ability to **prescribe** those medications.

This causes a gap for patients with opioid use disorder and disproportionately affects the poor and minorities especially in Baltimore City and rural Maryland, who would benefit from treatment with suboxone prescribed monthly, rather than methadone dispensed daily.

Adding the ability to prescribe suboxone for CNSs will allow 310 **more** providers to address the Maryland opioid crisis.

CNSs are highly educated and nationally certified and must conform to standards for practice determined by their certifying organizations.

CNSs must recertify in their specialties every 5 years just like nurse practitioners and must complete 25 hours of continuing education in Pharmacology every 5 years to remain certified.

We recognize the concerns the Radiologists expressed regarding wording in the proposed regulations for CNSs and have submitted an amendment to this bill that is identical to the recommendations made by the Radiologists.

40 states and the VA Medical System have granted CNSs prescribing authority. It's time to close the gap in Maryland

Thank you. I ask for a favorable report on SB 154.

Thank you, Senator Eckardt, for sponsoring this bill.

Sincerely,

Lorraine Diana, MSN, RN, CRNP

Legislative Co Chair, The Maryland Academy of Advanced Practice Clinicians

Ldianaart@aol.com