

**Committee: Finance Committee**

**Bill: SB 673 - Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2023**

**Position: SUPPORT (FAVORABLE)**

**3/14/23**

**Brittany Yerkes, MS, PA-C, AAHIVS**

Madam Chair,

My name is Brittany Yerkes, and I have been a practicing Physician Assistant (PA) in the state of Maryland since 2011. I am in strong support of SB 673, a bill which aims to ameliorate current practice laws in Maryland to be more reflective of the collaboration that occurs in current healthcare and to update regulations for better alignment with PA legislation in surrounding states, such as Delaware and West Virginia.

I have been a practicing PA since 2011 and served as a faculty member at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore's Physician Assistant Program for two years. My passion for healthcare struck in an odd way, during a course I took at my undergraduate college, Lehigh University, that focused on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It was that course that shaped the trajectory of my career and helped me to realize how I could give back to my hometown on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

For the last 12 years, I have focused my career on becoming an expert in the management of HIV, among other infectious diseases, and the prevention of HIV, commonly known as Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). I began my training in Baltimore, Maryland before relocating back to the Eastern Shore in 2015. In 2019, I was recruited by my current supervising physician, Dr. Stephen Robinson, to my current practice at a local Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) with the intention to develop a comprehensive HIV management program. The goal being to **increase the access to HIV care by local, highly trained providers**. In fact, prior to my relocation to the Eastern Shore, the only care that was available to people living with HIV (PLWH) and other infectious diseases was contracted out to providers in Baltimore. Not only did this create a major barrier for patients having to travel and communicate with a healthcare provider over 200 miles away, but it limited the care that patients were able to receive due to funding and grant stipulations.

With that said, my current supervising physician has an interest in the treatment of HIV but does not specialize in the field nor plan to. I say this only to acknowledge the outdated practice laws which suggest that the care I provide to my patients is directed by the supervising physician who has signed my delegation agreement filed with the Maryland Board of Physicians. This is, quite frankly, not reflective of my current practice or the practice of many PAs in the state. As you can imagine, if nothing changes under Maryland law, one of my main concerns remains that if my supervising physician were to take ill, leave the practice, or suddenly be unable to fulfill his current duties, my patients, who rely on my specialized knowledge and experience, would be unable to receive the same life-sustaining care

In closing, I hope you can see how important it is to update our current practice laws to not only protect the many PAs who are providing valuable services in underserved populations, but mainly to protect the *patients* that we serve. I feel enormously blessed to be caring for individuals in and around the town where I was raised, and the passing of the PA Modernization Act will allow me to continue to provide care to residents of the Eastern Shore of Maryland and hopefully recruit others into the field.

Best regards,



Brittany Yerkes, PA-C