

Hearing Date: March 14, 2023

Committee: Finance

Bill: **SB 0673** – Physician Assistants – Revision (Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2023)

Position: SUPPORT (Favorable)

I am writing in **SUPPORT** of **Senate Bill 0673**, to promote patient care access through the modernization of legislation restricting highly trained and qualified physician assistants (PAs) from their practice efficacy. PAs seek continued collaboration with physicians while changing administrative paperwork to better reflect the actual practice environment, as interprofessional team practice is required for every health care provider.

While some organizations may not be as intimately familiar with PA education and training, this naivety has created barriers owing to a misunderstanding regarding a PA's qualifications in the medical field. To review, PAs are often trained alongside medical students, and post-graduation obtain/maintain national board certification, are licensed by the Maryland Board of Physicians (MBP), hold other prescriptive licensures (i.e., CDS, DEA). PAs provide evaluative, diagnostic, and treatment interventions for all primary care and sub-specialty populations.

Facilitating a proficient fund of medical knowledge and skills development is a cornerstone of PA education nationwide. However, despite meeting core competencies and acquisition of both licensure and certification, the ability to perform certain acts, including skills that have been established through rigorous assessment phases, there is a high probability that a PA's ability to work within this scope of training will be delayed by unnecessary secondary applications, and thus, further clotting the public health system with service delay. Presently, there are several cumbersome, ineffectual, administrative steps PAs must navigate for authorization from the MBP to work in certain capacities within the State of Maryland, termed 'advanced duties'; Maryland is the last state in the country to require a separate application for many tasks that are part of basic PA education.

I can attest to the high caliber of PA education and training first-hand, as:

1. **I am a PA** with expertise in behavioral/mental health care, crisis intervention, and experience in the urgent care setting;
2. I became the **first PA in the State of Maryland** authorized by the Maryland Board of Physicians (MBP) authorized to perform **psychiatric evaluations** (2018) and conduct **telepsychiatry** appointments (2019);
3. I am a **PA Program and Behavioral Health Educator**; and
4. I am also an educated, trained, and **licensed clinical professional counselor** (LCPC) in Maryland.

In PA education, it is a standard educational requirement for PA programs, as set-forth by the national accrediting body – the [Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the PA](#) (ARC-PA) and by the educational [Core Tasks and Learning Objective](#) standards established by the PA Education Association (PAEA).

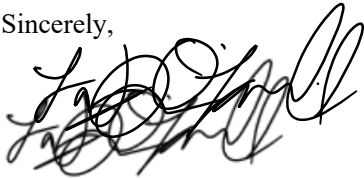
In particular, I wish to highlight that PA students are required to learn psychiatric evaluation/assessment, common behavioral counseling techniques, psychopharmacology, pathophysiology, and apply use of the standard diagnostic resource – the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR, *American Psychiatric Association*) – in-conjunction with medical knowledge to differentiate primary psychiatric conditions from those of somatic origin. Upon graduation, the PA graduate’s high level of knowledge, skill, training, and interventional judgment capacity is demonstrated via the PA National Certification Examination (PANCE). PAs must also perform board recertification and routinely participate in continuing medical education (CMEs) and Board recertification.

Modernizing legislative parameters, such as through **SUPPORT** of **SB 0673**, is an ethical duty of the medical profession and all health care stakeholders, to catalyze patient care access to reasonably affordable services by qualified health care professionals, such as PAs.

As a PA, an LCPC, Educator, and Advocate, I humbly request **favorable SUPPORT** of **Senate Bill 0673**.

Thank you for your time, compassion, leadership, and commitment to service!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laurarose Dunn-O'Farrell', written in a cursive style.

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