

Hearing Date: March 14, 2023

Committee: Finance

Bill: [SB674 – Parity With Other Health Care Practitioners \(Physician Assistant Parity Act of 2023\)](#)

Position: SUPPORT (Favorable)

This is a letter in **Support of SB 674- PA Modernization Act**. My name is Tiffany S. Maxwell, I have been a practicing physician assistant for the past 18 years and physician educator for the past 8 years. I currently serve in the position of Department Chair and Program Director at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore Physician Assistant Program. The UMES PA Program is a 28 month program, 120 credit program. With 88 credits dedicated the didactic year and 32 credits for the clinical year.

As many of you know, the Eastern Shore of Maryland is a federally designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area and a Medically Underserved Area, and to date UMES is only Physician Assistant Program located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The UMES PA Program was created to address the health professional shortage and support and promote health professional diversity on the Eastern Shore. Our mission is to recruit and retain local health local students, as over 50% of our student population is from the local area.

Therefore, it is paramount that our state support and remove barriers from practice in an effort to retain newly graduated physician assistants. The current state laws do not foster recruitment of or retaining new graduates, but serve as an administrative barrier that delays and deters physician assistants from being hired and utilized to their fullest potential, in comparison to our neighboring states of Delaware and Virginia. The PA community is not looking to change their scope of practice or their relationship and collaborative partnership with the physician community.

Last week, I have heard testimony with regards to the extent of physician assistant training and as a physician assistant educator, I can assure you that medical training that PA students receives is robust and highly regulated. The PA profession has one of the most vigorous accrediting body which is the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). The University System of Maryland, and Maryland PA Programs can attest to this, as it takes years for PA Programs to be developed and accredited and it also takes highly qualified PA leaders to do so.

With regards to compliance and oversight of the curriculum and training, the ARC-PA requires that a Board Certified Physician participates in the design and development of the curriculum and training to ensure that we are staying in compliance within the standard of practice and within our scope. We have over 9 credits dedicated to Clinical Pharmacology which equates to

over 126 hours contact hours; which is taught by Clinical Pharmacist, local health professionals to include physicians and physicians assistants. Our students also have over 100 ours of didactic and clinical education with regards to mental/behavioral health education and practice. Maryland Physician Assistant Programs produce students are academically and clinical compent to perform the task required of them once they graduate. All new graduate health professionals will start as novice learners once they arrive to their practice site for the first time. However, like all health care professionals, they will grow and advance in their practice and desired health care discipline and will earn the right and privilege to practice at the full scope of the clinical and legal capacity.

In closing, the PA community seeks supportive legislation that will support the health care community to work with all members of the health care team and allow physician assistants to work to their fullest capacity. Allowing physician assistants to work at the top of their license will help to close gaps on access and health care equity.

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