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Executive Nominations Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Finance Committee

SB 673 – Physician Assistants – Revisions (Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2023)

SB 674 – Physician Assistants – Parity with Other Health Care Practitioners (Physician Assistant Parity Act of 2023)

Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Griffith, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the distinguished Senate Finance Committee for this opportunity to jointly present Senate Bill 673, the Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2023, and Senate Bill 674, the Physician Assistant Parity Act of 2023 and to respectfully ask for your support of these bills which would modernize the law regarding the working relationship between Physicians and Physician Assistants to better reflect current practice.

Physician workforce shortages challenge the long-term viability of a strong medical network and the ability to achieve the goals of improving the quality of care, improving health of populations, and reducing per capita health care costs. The United States is facing a projected workforce shortage of between 37,800 and 124,000 physicians. Overall, Maryland is 16 percent below the national average for number of physicians available for clinical practice, and that will become worse over time. Maryland hospitals are already struggling to maintain adequate coverage in the emergency room and to support many of the medical specialties, especially in Southern Maryland, Western Maryland, and on the Eastern Shore.

This workforce shortage is similar to the workforce shortage that created the Physician Assistant profession in the 1960s when the first class of PAs graduated from the Duke University Medical Center in 1967. It can take up to a decade to properly educate and train a physician, whereas most graduate-level Physician Assistant programs are completed within three years. We need to take action now to ensure our caregivers can meet our needs. Medicine is now a team sport, and we need to build and train a strong supportive structure that better utilizes our Physician Assistants.

The Physician Assistant Modernization Act would enable Physicians Assistants to work collaboratively with the medical team and make contributions that they are currently restricted from doing. SB 673 would change the “Delegation Agreement” to a “Collaborative Agreement,” which is consistent with the education and expanded role the PAs have taken on due to limited staffing and the COVID-19 pandemic. While scope of practice has been expanded, there are guardrails in place – education, requirements, licensing, collaboration, and identified out of scope practices.

The Physician Assistant Parity Act would allow Physician Assistants to contribute to tasks they were previously excluded from despite their growth and education since the profession was created almost six years ago. With colleagues, they can serve by performing duties in specified areas of law; such as, guardianship, health care decisions, mental disorders, disabilities, involuntary admissions, emergency evacuation, allergy treatment, dentistry, dispensing/administering prescription drugs, attendant care, and protective orders. In addition, a PA will become a member of the Statewide Advisory Commission on Immunizations and a PA representative will serve on the Maryland Health Care Commission's Primary Care Services Workgroup.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 673 and SB 674.