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

**Position: *Support***

March 14, 2023

Senate Finance Committee

**Bill Summary**

There are numerous provisions within different articles of the Code where physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, and other clinicians and health care professionals have specific authority, but physician assistants have not been included. This bill seeks to add physician assistants to the various sections of the code, including:

- ***Correctional Code*** – allows a physician assistant to admit a pregnant inmate to the infirmary for care;
- ***Estates and Trusts Article*** – allows a physician assistant as one of the health care professionals permitted to sign a petition for guardianship;
- ***Health General Article*** – allows a physician assistant to be one of the health care providers to examine a patient prior to providing, withholding, or withdrawing treatment;
- ***Health Occupations Article*** – allows a physician assistant to be consulted where they are providing services to the patient instead of or in addition to a primary care physician;
- ***Human Services Article*** – allows a physician assistant as one of the health care professionals permitted to sign a certification form for financial assistance;
- ***Public Safety Article*** – allows a physician assistant as one of the health care professionals permitted to sign a petition for a protective order; and
- ***State Personnel and Pension Article*** – allows a physician assistant as one of the health care professionals permitted to sign a certificate of illness or disability.

**Rationale**

MedStar Health is the largest health care provider in Maryland Washington, D.C. region. MedStar Health's more than 300 care locations include 10 hospitals, 33 urgent care clinics, ambulatory care centers, and primary and specialty care providers. We are also home to the MedStar Health Research Institute and a comprehensive scope of health-related organizations all recognized regionally and nationally for excellence. MedStar Health has one of the largest graduate medical education programs in the country, training 1,150 medical residents annually, and is the medical education and clinical partner of Georgetown University.

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MedStar Health's team of more than 32,000 includes physicians, nurses, and many other clinical and non-clinical associates who together support MedStar Health's patient-first philosophy that combines care, compassion, and clinical excellence with an emphasis on customer service.

Physician assistants and nurse practitioners play a critical role in delivering health care to patients in every corner of Maryland. In recent years, physician assistants have become an increasingly important class of medical practitioners in the health care system. Following Physicians, Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners are the most skilled among the commonly observed types of medical practitioners, having earned a master's degree from an accredited medical sciences program. Further, PAs perform many of the same tasks as physicians within the U.S. healthcare system. We are confident in their abilities and are certain they will perform their duties with the highest standards of care. Consequently, we believe they should have been included in the various sections of the code.

We support SB 674 because, over the last two decades, Physician Assistants have inadvertently not been included under many provisions of law in numerous sections of the Maryland Code. This proposal attempts to address those instances where PAs have the education, training, and expertise to perform those enumerated duties. SB 674 will address those omissions and oversights.

For the reasons stated above, we ask that you give SB 674 a ***favorable*** report.