

Maryland General Assembly

Senate Finance Committee

Testimony of Kristy Fogle, MMS, PA-C

IN SUPPORT OF - SB 673 - Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2023

March 13, 2023

Distinguished members of the committee,

My name is Kristy Fogle. I am a licensed Physician Assistant (PA) and have been practicing medicine in Maryland for the past 10 years. I am one of more than 4,600 PAs who practice medicine in Maryland. I have practiced both in the emergency medicine setting of hospitals, in and around Baltimore and, more recently, have served my institution as a leader to our department's clinical team.

I write today with concern for Maryland's current PA practice laws, which are outdated and do not adequately reflect our licensing with respect to other healthcare providers in the State. As licensed healthcare providers, PAs are trained to work in a collaborative, team-based approach to patient care. This collaborative approach forms the backbone of the PA's current practice relationship within interdisciplinary healthcare teams and with patients. We saw the benefit of this approach come into play throughout the COVID-19 pandemic when the flexibility of Physician Assistants played a pivotal role in delivering care to patients as our workforces were stretched thin.

As an ED provider, I can personally attest to the collaborative nature of our relationship with physicians and other members of the healthcare team, working side by side in a "team-based" approach to patient care, which is what attracted me to the PA profession in the first place. Rather than being "delegated" specific tasks or tied to a specific physician, my days included seeing patients within my own scope of practice and consulting with many attendings. If I had questions that fell outside of the scope of an emergency trained provider, like any provider, I consulted specialists within the specialty that my patients required. My practice included a wide array of emergency-specific procedures, which were gained through training and experience in my setting with the support of many physicians and other experienced practitioners.

It is vital that we expand, not limit, PA practice licensing guidelines, which would usher more PAs into the Maryland workforce, while allowing us to practice to the top of our licenses, especially in times of public health crisis. The burden of identifying a single physician to be responsible for each PA is an outdated and antiquated concept that is being eliminated across the country. In many settings (i.e. the Emergency Department), PAs work as part of a team of

providers. Requiring a matrix of supervising physicians to cover every scenario and discipline for which the PA might provide care is unnecessary paperwork and expense that does not improve care from the patient perspective.

Maryland patients need the General Assembly to step forward to ensure that PA practice is consistent with the surrounding states and District of Columbia, thereby increasing access to care for our patients.

This bill, SB 673, will take the necessary steps toward updating the PA statute to reflect current practice, allow better access to care and reduce the administrative burden on healthcare practices, while removing barriers to Team-Based Practice by: Replacing the delegation model for PAs with a collaboration model where PAs can interact, consult and/or refer to the appropriate member of a healthcare team. This more accurately reflects the current practice of PAs across the country.

This bill, if enacted, will take an important step towards providing modernization that reflects the current practice of our Maryland PA community.

As a practicing Maryland PA, I ask that you pass this measure with a favorable recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration.