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HB 727 – Physician Assistants – Revisions (Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2023)

Position: Support

March 6, 2023

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Summary

HB 727 updates the Physician Assistant (PA) statute to reflect current practice, allow better access to care, and reduce the administrative burden on healthcare practices. The bill does not recommend independent practice, but rather seeks to allow PAs the following:

- A scope of practice based on a PA's education, training, experience, and competencies;
- A "supervision" working relationship with physicians rather than a "collaboration registration" with a physician;
- A "collaboration registration" with interdisciplinary healthcare teams, instead of a delegation agreement;
- Eliminates the concept that a PA's scope of practice should be based upon the physician's scope by allowing PAs to practice within their education and training providing better access to treatment services; and
- Eliminates the concept and distinction between "advanced" and "core" duties, consistent with the national standards and surrounding states.

Rationale

MedStar Health is the largest healthcare provider in Maryland and 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. 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.

MedStar believes that physician assistants should be permitted to practice medicine at the top of their training, education, and experience. MedStar appreciates the contributions made by licensed physician assistants and has a great deal of confidence in the quality of health care they provide to our members. Our MedStar Medical Group MMG – the largest multispecialty medical group – employs over 2500 physicians and licensed medical providers, including over 533 physician

Assistant. Within the MedStar Health system, physician assistants collaborate with physicians and other medical professionals to provide high-quality patient care in a variety of specialties and settings, including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Dermatology, Orthopedics, Cardiology, Oncology, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Emergency medicine, Nephrology, Occupational Medicine, Vascular, General and Cardiothoracic Surgery, Infectious Disease, Radiology, Urology and Otolaryngology (ears, nose, and throat).

MedStar Health supports HB 727 because it removes barriers to practice for physician assistants and ensures greater access to health care for Maryland residents where the need is greatest. Since 2016, the number of physician assistants has increased. Despite this increase, physician assistants remain underutilized because of Maryland’s restrictive practice laws which prevent physician assistants from practicing at the top of their training and education.

The occupation is projected to grow 28 percent, much faster than the average for all occupations, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics¹. As the demand for health care services increases, physician assistants will be needed to provide care to patients to fill the gap left by the physician shortage.

For the reasons stated above, we ask that you give HB 727 a **favorable** report.

¹ <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm>