

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

Support Testimony of

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Madam Chair,

My name is Richard Rohrs and I have been a practicing PA in Maryland for 46 years. I currently serve as Assistant Vice President at LifeBridge Health. I have had the honor to have served as president of the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the National Commission on the Certification of Physician Assistants, and the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants. I have also served as a consultant to many countries around the world looking to create a PA model in their healthcare systems.

During this time, I have witnessed a profession that has grown from a novel idea at Duke University to address the physician shortage, to one that now has over 168,000 PAs providing over 500 million patient visits each year. A profession that had its roots in primary care but now has expanded to care for patients in every aspect of medicine. The recent healthcare crisis highlighted the contributions of PAs with many serving on the front lines in our Emergency Departments, Hospitals, Critical Care Units, etc. Sadly, we lost a number of colleagues to COVID but their heroic efforts will never be forgotten.

Today we are here to discuss HB 727, the PA Modernization Act that is designed to bring Maryland regulations to the mainstream. While well-intentioned twenty years ago, the concept of a PA being tied to a single supervising physician is quite outdated and no longer reflects how medicine is practiced. After over half of century of practice, PAs have proven to be invaluable members of the healthcare team. **Team is the operative word.** No one, including physicians, cares for patients alone, any longer. The practice of medicine is far too complex and demanding to rely on the skills of single individuals and the often delayed access to their care. The top-down system of care delivery cannot meet the needs of our

patients. No one is questioning that physicians are the most educated and skilled providers in their respective fields, but they are not alone in acquiring the requisite knowledge to effectively and safely care for our patients. Often physicians themselves will refer to a PA who has specialized training or technical skills.

This is the concept of collaboration! Collaboration is where the team utilizes all of its parts to the full extent of their training. Artificially restricting the skills of one group for the benefit of another compromises the strength of the team. If we learned nothing from the pandemic, it is that we have far more needs in healthcare than we do providers to meet those needs. The General Assembly in their wisdom last year increased the funding for loan forgiveness to physicians and physician assistants. To continue to shackle PAs with regulations that are out of touch with the rest of the country would seem quite contradictory to the effort to expand access to care.

Other speakers will address the specifics of this HB727 as well as to highlight the outstanding skills and training that PAs receive so I will not mention them here. In closing, I would like to thank the members of the Committee for this opportunity to highlight our profession and would strongly encourage your support of HB727.