

Maryland General Assembly

Health and Government Operations Committee

Testimony of Kristy Fogle, MMS, PA-C

IN SUPPORT OF - HB 722 - Physician Assistant Parity Act of 2023

March 6, 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I write today with concern for Maryland's current PA practice laws, which are outdated and do not adequately reflect our licensing with respect to other healthcare providers in the State.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 who continued to fill gaps in care during the pandemic and beyond, PAs deserve to be included with other licensed healthcare providers mentioned in statute where their education and training for a particular healthcare service is the same.

As an ED provider, I can attest to the need for parity with other healthcare providers. PAs work in every specialty area from primary care to critical care and are indispensable to the functioning of many service lines, both inpatient and outpatient. In the ED, my scope of practice included evaluation of psychiatric patients as well as other acutely ill patients who required emergent action. PAs are more than capable of evaluating patients for admission to mental health facilities and their ability to take action should be incorporated in the same way as other practitioners. Not doing so places patients at risk and creates unnecessary barriers to timely care.

We saw the need for PAs increase throughout the COVID-19 pandemic when we played a pivotal role in delivering care to patients as our workforces were stretched thin. It is vital that we expand, not limit, PA practice parity, which would usher more PAs into the Maryland workforce, while allowing us to practice to work to the top of our licenses, especially in times of public health emergency and beyond. These changes allow community health centers, hospitals, health systems, group and private practices flexibility to assemble healthcare teams to best meet patient needs, facilitating the ability of PAs to serve in medically underserved and rural communities.

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

This bill, HB722, will take the necessary steps toward updating Maryland statutes that reflect current practice, allowing better access to care and reducing the administrative burden on healthcare practices by: Amending certain provisions of law to include physician assistants in the health care practitioners who may take certain actions, including actions related to the guardianship of disabled persons, admission of individuals to mental health facilities, the Emergency and Allergy Treatment Program, the Attendant Care Program, and petitions for extreme risk protective orders.

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

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

Thank you for your consideration.