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*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

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Testimony in Support of  
Senate Bill 167 - Physician Assistants - Revisions  
(Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2024)  
Senate Finance Committee  
February 20, 2024

**The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 167 – Physician Assistants – Revisions (Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2024).** This bill would broaden physician assistants' scope of practice and replace the supervisory relationship with a collaboration registration.

Rural communities throughout the state of Maryland are experiencing unprecedented shortages in healthcare, specifically in the availability of healthcare workers. Having access to healthcare is a foundation for a good quality of life. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) reports that more than 1.1 million Marylanders are in a primary care Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). That's over 1.1 million Marylanders that lack access to the primary health care they need. In the U.S, rural or partially rural areas make up over 68% of the designated primary care HPSAs.

It is important that the shortages of healthcare workers be addressed now before further complications arise. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Occupational Outlook Handbook reports that the need for physician assistants will increase by 31% between 2020 and 2030, and there will be about 12,200 openings annually. The need for health care services will increase due to the healthcare services needed to provide for an aging population and an increase in patients with chronic disease. Rural areas are already experiencing an aging population and less retention of younger workers to provide an appropriate workforce. In addition to having worse health conditions and access to medical care, this could lead the current issues being faced by rural communities to be exacerbated in the future.

Senate Bill 167 supports physician assistants by removing barriers that hinder their practice. The current state laws pose administrative obstacles that delay and deter physician assistants from being employed and used to their full potential, unlike our neighboring states of Delaware and Virginia which border our rural regions. By expanding the accessibility of physician assistants throughout the state, this can help start to combat the ongoing healthcare shortage crisis that is affecting the state.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully asks for your favorable support of Senate Bill 167.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic, or regulatory solutions.

*"A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland"*