

SB 0167– Physician Assistants – Revisions (Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2024)

Support Testimony of Sarah Hall, PA-C

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Good afternoon, members of the Senate Committee,

My name is Sarah Hall, a Maryland licensed physician assistant specializing in spine surgery, working for Luminis Health Orthopedics in Annapolis, Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support for the bill, SB 0167 - Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2024, legislation put forth by the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants (MdAPA).

As a spine surgery physician assistant, I have witnessed firsthand the critical role that physician assistants play in addressing healthcare provider shortages and improving access to care for patients across our state. Maryland, like many other states, is facing significant healthcare provider shortages, particularly in primary care, women's health, behavioral health, and underserved rural communities. These shortages place undue pressure on practicing providers and limit patients' access to essential healthcare services.

Physician assistants are trained on an accelerated medical model and a team-based approach, which includes collaboration with physicians and other healthcare professionals. By working collaboratively with physicians and other members of the healthcare team, physician assistants like myself are able to extend the reach of our healthcare system and ensure that patients receive the comprehensive care they need.

The proposed revisions outlined in this bill are crucial for modernizing the practice of physician assistants in Maryland. By removing unnecessary administrative barriers, such as outdated licensing requirements and delegation agreements, this legislation will streamline the hiring process for PAs and enable us to more efficiently provide care to our patients. Additionally, by emphasizing the team-based approach to healthcare that physician assistants are trained in, this bill recognizes the valuable contributions that PAs make to multidisciplinary care teams and the overall functioning of our healthcare system.

In my role as a spine surgery physician assistant, I exemplify the diverse capabilities and contributions that physician assistants make across all specialties of healthcare. Much like my counterparts in primary care, women's health, and behavioral health, I undertake a wide range of responsibilities. These tasks not only allow our practice to evaluate and treat more patients, but also contribute to the overall effectiveness and success of our practice.

As a resident of Maryland and someone who has experienced the healthcare system firsthand, I can attest to the significant challenges that patients face in accessing care due to healthcare provider shortages. My own struggles in finding a provider for myself reflect the experiences of countless others in our state. Patients often encounter lengthy wait times to see a primary care physician, with some being forced to wait months for an appointment. This legislation is vital for addressing these challenges and improving access to care for all Maryland residents.

The credentialing and onboarding process physician assistants experience can be excessively lengthy and burdensome. These regulatory hurdles and administrative burdens not only deter potential PAs from practicing in Maryland but also exacerbate the existing healthcare provider shortages in our state. Streamlining this process through the proposed legislation will facilitate the recruitment and retention of physician assistants, ultimately improving access to care for patients in Maryland.

I urge you to support and enact this legislation for the benefit of our patients, communities, and the healthcare system as a whole. By modernizing the practice of physician assistants in Maryland, we can ensure that all patients have access to high-quality, comprehensive care, regardless of where they live or their socioeconomic status.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving healthcare in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Sarah Hall