



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF DERMATOLOGY PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

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Hearing Date: February 20, 2024

Bill: HB 806 Physician Assistants-Revisions (Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2024)

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Position: SUPPORT (FAVORABLE) written testimony

Madam Chair, members of the Committee,

As a pioneer in the field of Physician Assistant (PA) with 50 years of clinical practice and a founding member and past president of both the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants (MAPA) and the Maryland Association of Dermatology Physician Assistants (MADPA), I have witnessed the challenges and barriers to practice that PAs face in Maryland. The current legislation, the Maryland PA Practice Act of 1986, does not adequately address the evolving needs and the capabilities of PAs in our state.

Physician Assistants (PA's) are vigorously trained and highly educated clinicians in ALL clinical settings. They play a critical role in the delivery of healthcare and increase patient access to 6.1 million patients in every corner of Maryland. PAs have their own medical license, malpractice insurance, practice standards, NPI number and ethical obligations. PAs take the same Hippocratic Oath as physicians. An oath "To uphold professional ethical standards of medicine".

Maryland has steadily fallen behind all other states with respect to current PA statutory and regulatory restrictions. These restrictions affect how Maryland PAs function in the healthcare workforce and do not adequately reflect our licensing with respect to other healthcare providers in the state. No other U.S. state or territory embodies Maryland's antiquated distinction between "core" and "advanced duties" or the processes by which they must be approved. This only causes delays in PA hiring, restrictions in PA practice specialties, or incites medical practices in Maryland to abandon their efforts to hire PAs all together. Removing the barriers of the current law, the scope of practice would be determined by what is in the best interest of patient care at the practice level.

HB 806 Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2024 is in line with the modernization efforts seen in other states' PA practice laws. By removing the barriers and restrictions in the current law, PAs would have greater flexibility to deliver healthcare under collaborative agreements. This would be particularly beneficial in underserved and rural communities where access to healthcare is limited.

I would like to highlight the unfair treatment of PAs in the specialty of Dermatology. Maryland imposes unnecessary supervision requirements on PAs in dermatology procedures, while other advanced providers, such as Nurse Practitioners, are not subjected to the same restrictions. This over-regulation hinders the patient's access to care and creates an unnecessary burden on the dermatology/PA team. Because of the stringent restriction and the lack of collaborative practice agreement PAs are less favorable in dermatology practices for employment than their counterparts. Unfortunately, due to the shortage of dermatology providers, there is an excessively long wait time for appointments. As we have been seeing skin cancers are on the rise and continue to proliferate if there is no intervention, putting patients at risk of metastases. Removing these barriers would allow Maryland's dermatology PAs to serve properly as full members of their dermatology practice team without layers of outdated regulatory burdens.

It is important for Maryland to keep pace with the neighboring states in terms of PA practice laws. Without positive practice changes, Maryland will struggle to recruit and retain highly educated and skilled PAs. As the healthcare workforce shortage continues to be a pressing issue, PAs can be part of the solution by working at the top of their license and helping to close the gap in access and healthcare equity.

Therefore, I respectfully urge your support and favorable report on House Bill 806, the Physician Assistant Modernization Act 2024. The legislation, put forth by the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants and supported by the Maryland Association of Dermatology Physician Assistants, will remove the current legislative barriers to PA practice and create an improved and modernized healthcare environment for PAs.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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