

HB/806 SB 0167 – Physician Assistants – Revisions (Physician Assistant
Modernization Act of 2024)

Support Testimony of **SB 0167/HB 806**

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Good afternoon, members of the Senate Committee.

My name is **Nicole Wooten**, the **Physician Assistant Program Director and Program Chair** working at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne, Maryland. I support the bill, SB 0167/HB 806 - Physician Assistant Modernization Act of 2024 legislation put forth by the Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants (MdAPA).

As a Physician Assistant, I am fully capable of evaluating, diagnosing, and treating patients in all specialties. Unfortunately, with the current legislation in place my scope of practice is limited by the restrictions of the Maryland Board of Physicians. Despite my skill and education to perform advanced duties, I am unable to complete certain skills like lumbar punctures or joint aspirations without approval from the Board instead of at the practice level which can limit patient access to care in times of physician shortages. Furthermore, having a supervising physician and delineation agreements are preventing employers from hiring PAs. I was denied a job because I required a supervising physician and a Nurse Practitioner did not. As a Program Director for a PA program, this indirectly affects our clinical sites and puts our accreditation status at risk. Since jobs prefer NPs, there is a shortage of PAs; therefore, there are limited clinical sites with PAs as preceptors. We are struggling to obtain and maintain clinical sites, which is necessary for our PA program to support our clinical year students and stay in compliance with our accrediting body, ARC-PA. Our PA program is a vital component to the Eastern Shore community, as our mission is to produce competent PAs that will serve patients in underserved diverse communities.

Our graduates have been working alongside of physicians, nurses, and other health professionals, across medical specialties providing high quality, compassionate care to patients throughout Maryland. Despite completing an accelerated, rigorous curriculum focused on the medical model and team-based approach, graduates seeking employment in Maryland are encountering delays in their ability to practice due to administrative barriers, such as central processing of delegation agreements. These delays make it challenging for our graduates to compete with other advance practice providers (APPs) for vacant positions within the Maryland health systems. Furthermore, graduates who have made a commitment to improving patient access to care in Maryland are burdened with significant debt, which is compounded by these delays in employment. These graduates, who are Maryland residents and now trained PAs, have found less administrative barriers in surrounding states and are seeking employment there. Meanwhile, patient access to care, particularly in primary care, women's health, behavioral health, underserved, and

rural communities continue to suffer from unprecedented healthcare shortages in Maryland. The proposed legislation focuses on removal of these administrative barriers, which prolong the time for employment of well-trained, patient centric PAs, who can assist in improving patient access to care.

I ask that you support and enact this legislation on behalf of our patients, communities, and state.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Maryland,

Nicole K. Wooten PA-C

Nicole Wooten, PA-C, MHS