

2748 Weatherstone Dr  
Ellicott City, MD 20142

House Health Committee  
6 Bladen Street  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
March 16, 2026

Dear Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the House:

My name is Saral Patel, and I am a resident of Howard County, Maryland. I have proudly called Maryland home since 2002. I am a Certified Anesthesiologist Assistant currently practicing in Washington, DC. I completed my Master's level training at Emory University in 2000, and for nearly 25 years, I have provided safe, effective anesthesia care under the medical direction of physician anesthesiologists in DC.

For almost my entire career, I have commuted across state lines to work in Washington, DC. I am grateful for the opportunity to practice in our Nation's capital, but my home and my heart are in Maryland.

I work in DC because I must provide for my family, but I choose to live in Maryland because of the quality of life it offers. My family has built deep roots here in Howard County. My 4 children have attended the Howard County Public School System their entire lives. They have played baseball at Kiwanis-Wallas Park for more than a decade, and some of my most cherished memories are sitting at the fields cheering them on. I walk regularly at Centennial Lake, ride my bike at Rockburn Park, and dine out at the Merriweather District. These are not merely places for my family, they are the community that has shaped us, the foundation that grounds us, and the home we have worked so hard to build and preserve.

However, the commute is taking a significant toll. What was once about an hour each way has now become 1.5 to 2 hours each way since the return to in-person work following COVID. The drive from Ellicott City to the surgery center in NW Washington, DC is long, exhausting, and increasingly unsustainable. Over 24 years, I have spent thousands of hours on the highway, which is time away from my family, my community, and, quite frankly, has a negative impact on my overall wellness.

The commute is not only physically draining, but it is my only option to continue practicing the profession to which I have dedicated my life, a profession that promotes education and patient safety for over 50 years. My 42 mile commute each way costs approximately \$60 dollars a day when you account for the 2025 IRS business mileage rate. If I were able to work in Maryland, that cost would be reduced by roughly half. In addition, I incur daily expenses in Washington, DC, for food, fuel, and parking, funds that could instead support Maryland businesses. In fact,

the savings from reduced commuting mileage alone would offset my professional licensing fees within just a few months.

People often ask why I do not simply move to DC and shorten the commute. I have considered it. But doing so would mean uprooting my children from their schools, their friends, and the only community they have ever known. It would mean leaving behind the safe, family-centered environment that drew us to Maryland in the first place. It is heartbreaking to feel forced to choose between my profession and the community my family loves.

House Bill 1558 represents an opportunity to change that. Supporting this bill would allow certified anesthesiologist assistants like me to practice in Maryland under the medical direction of physician anesthesiologists, just as we safely and effectively do in Washington, DC, and in 22 other states. It would expand access to high-quality anesthesia care for Maryland patients while allowing experienced professionals to serve the communities in which we live.

I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 1558. Your support would benefit Maryland families like mine, healthcare professionals who want to serve their home communities, and patients who deserve access to safe, team-based anesthesia care.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saral Patel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Saral Patel, CAA