

Bill. SB 476- Health Occupations - Nurses - Delegation of Nursing Tasks

Position: SUPPORT

Committees: Senate Education, Health, and Environment Affairs

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I would like to speak in support of SB 476 which gives nurse practitioners the authority to delegate to medical assistants. I am the owner of an integrated practice providing primary care and behavioral health services in Allegany County, Maryland. When I first opened my practice in 2012, I employed a medical assistant. When I became aware that nurse practitioners could not delegate to medical assistants (MAs), our MA became an over-qualified front desk employee. I now employ LPNs and CNAs. Although our providers value the services of our CNAs, the limited scope of CNA practice adds additional responsibilities to the LPN. The CNA gets height, weight, and vital signs when taking patients to the exam room. All other tasks including medication reconciliation in the health record, injections, urine dipsticks, throat swabs, urine drugs screens are the responsibility of the LPN along with triage calls, test notifications to patients, and answering patient questions. Utilizing LPNs instead of MAs add to health care costs for those practices that do adhere to the scope of practice restriction.

Our LPN is currently off on unexpected medical leave, her 2nd cardiac event in 3 months. The responsibility of much of the LPN's duties as noted above is now falling to the nurse practitioners. It is very frustrating knowing that we have a competent, trained medical assistant who could perform these tasks. SB 476 would allow us as advanced practice registered nurse to delegate a nursing task or other technical tasks to this employee.

Allowing every member of the healthcare workforce to work to the full scope of their practice is particularly important in this COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 1 month ago, our LPN was off due to cardiac reasons and our CNA was off due to COVID quarantine. The nurse practitioners were doing both the CNA and the LPN duties. Again, our front desk medical assistant could have helped during this difficult time but was not legally able to do so.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your favorable vote on SB 476.

Sincerely,

Cathy S. Chapman, CRNP-BC, FNP, PMHNP, APMH CNS