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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 276

Health Occupations - Clinical Nurse Specialists - Prescribing Authority

Good afternoon, Madame Chair, Chairman Pendergrass, Vice Chairman Pena-Melnyk and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present HB 276, **Health Occupations - Clinical Nurse Specialists - Prescribing Authority**. This bill would simply create parity with this category of Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), who are highly educated and trained health care professionals, with other APNs, who already have prescriptive authority.

I learned this year, first from advocates and then from personal experience, that Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) are a particularly unsung and unrecognized, yet important part of our health care system. They are the folks whose role is singularly focused on patient outcomes when the acute situation is resolved. When my mother was in the hospital over the last year, it was a Clinical Nurse Specialist who coordinated her transition from hospital to the home. She consulted with me about what services my mother would need, how her medication would be managed, how the physicians would be following up. I came to rely on this person to be my contact when we needed further care.

Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) are highly educated, as a Master or Doctorate prepared Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN). They are experts in clinical practice, patient education, research, evidence-based practice, consultation, and have a role in coordination of patient care, nursing, and the health care systems.

While their scope of practice currently includes all the elements of other APRNs, it does not include prescriptive authority. Providing them with this authority will expand access to care, some of which came to light when families could not be present in hospitals during the pandemic. In hospitals where there is understaffing, CNSes can help bridge the gaps in care, which include making sure the patients have the appropriate medications. Their focus on patient outcomes can assure successful transition out of acute health situations and decrease the chances of re-occurrence, thus saving patients, hospitals, and communities not just money, but also a sense of being cared for.

These professional health care providers have the same level of education and training as other Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, who already have prescriptive authority. With this bill, I am asking you to allow Clinical Nurse Specialists to be able to use all of the skills in their position as they serve patients.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 276 and I respectfully request a favorable report.