

TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena Melnyk, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Department Committee
The Honorable Terri L. Hill

FROM: Gattu Panisri Rao, MD, MPH, FAAFP

DATE: March 5, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 1388 – *Labor and Employment – Noncompete and Conflict of Interest Clauses – Veterinary and Health Care Professionals*

I am writing to express my support for House Bill 1388.

I am a primary care physician that previously provided care to patients in Maryland. The question is why I am not practicing in Maryland at this time and where am I? I took a position with a health care system in Maryland immediately out of residency, with loans. Finding a job is critical especially after coming out of a family medicine residency. I had the choice of staying in New York or moving to Maryland, I chose the latter. Despite contract review and seeing the noncompete, it is a strong ideology that a primary care physician finds a community and provides for that community. After five years with that health care system, I made the decision to part with them. Upon this decision, I re-reviewed my contract and found that I had to follow the noncompete clause that required a “10 mile radius” from ANY of their clinics, not just my clinic. Based on the location of my clinic, it essentially forced me into the DC suburbs or out of state. At the time I had to think about my family and take into consideration that I did not have the money to buy myself out of the noncompete. Therefore, the best option was to move to practice medicine in another state, while residing in Maryland.

Now, I am working in another state as I still reside in Maryland. What that means is that I have contributed to the primary care workforce shortage in Maryland. Had the noncompete clause never existed, I could still be providing primary care needs for patients in Maryland. I am not alone in this, and in fact I have a few colleagues that work within my current health system, due to their noncompete clauses, from other health care systems in Maryland. In fact, they all still live in Maryland at this present time.

As a primary care physician, I take pride in immersing myself and caring for my community. Due to this principle, I have chosen to continue my work in the state I was displaced to, all while residing in Maryland. Voting in favor of House Bill 1388 would remove any barriers to practicing physicians who wish to remain in Maryland, something I wished for. More importantly we can continue to maintain a strong primary care workforce, thus leading to access to primary care needs in the state.

For the reasons set forth above, I respectfully ask the Committee to vote favorably on House Bill 1388 and increase access to physician care for Maryland patients.