



**Testimony in Support of Physicians Assistants Dispensing Medications before the Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee (Chair, Hon. Shane Pendergrass)**

**Tollie B. Elliott, MD, Chief Medical Officer, Mary's Center**

Good afternoon Honorable Pendergrass and members of the Committee, my name is Tollie B. Elliott, MD, I am a practicing Obstetrician/Gynecologist and Chief Medical Officer for Mary's Center. I am here today to support the passage of House Bill-1124 granting Physician Assistants authority to dispense medications for which they currently are permitted to prescribe.

Founded in 1988, today, Mary's Center currently cares for over 40,000 patients. Our care, which includes medical, dental, and behavioral health, is provided across 5 federally qualified health centers, with three located in the District of Columbia and two located in Maryland. In Maryland alone, we care for 18,000 patients in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. As we continue to pursue our mission, Mary's Center plans to add an additional 10,000 patients by the close of 2018.

Mary's Center's team of healthcare providers consists of physicians, midwives, nurse practitioners and physician assistants. As we continue to provide care for the uninsured and underinsured, it is imperative that we strengthen the scope of care for all providers to operate at the top of their licensure. In 36 states and the District of Columbia, physician assistants have full dispensing privileges. However, in Maryland, the dispensing restriction has a significant impact on the ability to fully maximize the scope of care from our dedicated, competent, and qualified physician assistants.

Every day, Mary's Center cares for pregnant mothers, their children, adults, and the elderly. With roughly 70% requiring their primary language to ensure quality care, nearly 45% are uninsurable. By staffing a diversified health care work force, our team of health care providers can ensure a fiscally sustainable model of care that supports the community. Moreover, with this team, of which physician assistants are a vital part, a reduction in health care expenditures are manifested in reduced hospital readmissions, fewer unnecessary emergency room visits, and enhanced continuity of care for conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and hypertension. The passage of HB-1124, removes the restriction of limited medication management for a vital member of our health care work force. Moreover, HB-1124 strengthens the medical services our organization provides and most importantly the community we serve.