



McAuley Health Center
A Nurse Managed Center
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October 12, 2020

Representative Hank Vaupel
Chairperson, Health Policy Committee
Michigan House of Representatives
Anderson House Office Building
124 North Capitol Avenue
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: Support for Senate Bill 826 (2020)

Dear Chairman Vaupel and Committee Members:

I am a board certified psychiatric nurse practitioner working in Detroit, providing mental health services at an integrated nurse-led primary care clinic. I am writing to convey my full support of SB 0826 (2020) that passed unanimously in the Senate, which was then forwarded to the House of Representatives Health Policy Committee for review (September 2020). I respectfully urge the Health Policy Committee to support and pass this important legislation that has the potential to significantly impact the mental health for thousands of Michiganders.

SB 0826 updates the Mental Health Code in three important and significant ways:

1. SB 0826 expands the definition of “mental health professional” to include physician assistant, certified nurse practitioner, and clinical nurse specialist-certified;
2. SB 0826 allows certain physical examinations to be conducted by a physician assistant, a certified nurse practitioner, or a clinical nurse specialist-certified; and,
3. SB 0826 allows clinical certificates executed by a physician assistant, a certified nurse practitioner, or a clinical nurse specialist-certified to be accepted in certain situations.

When the Mental Health Code was originally written under Act 258 in 1974, physician assistants and certified nurse practitioners were new professional degrees. The first academic program for both physician assistants (Duke) and for certified nurse practitioners (University of Colorado) started in 1965. The first clinical nurse specialist program started in 1954 (Rutgers); however, the number of graduates was limited in the initial years. Over the last four decades, the number of trained physician assistants, certified nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists-certified has exponentially expanded with many working in mental health, providing competency-based inpatient and outpatient treatment using evidence-based practices to improve mental health and quality of life indices for those experiencing mental disorders.

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(Located in the Mercy Primary Care Center)

McAuley Health Center is a nurse-led integrated behavioral and primary care clinic located on the lower east side of Detroit. We are a community outreach of the University of Detroit Mercy, providing health services to underinsured and uninsured Detroiters. In my experience of 30 years as a psychiatric nurse practitioner, persons with serious mental disorders oftentimes receive inadequate and delayed mental health interventions because there is not a psychiatrist or psychologist available to write a clinical certificate stating the person received a clinical evaluation and was determined to be mentally ill and requires psychiatric treatment. This situation is extremely distressful not only for the person with the mental disorder but also for his/her family and friends who are trying to help. Moreover, it can be a dangerous situation if the person is psychotic, hallucinating and paranoid. Expanding the definition of mental health professional to include physician assistant, certified nurse practitioner and clinical nurse specialist-certified can facilitate timely clinical certificates, emergency mental health care, and improved mental health outcomes.

In closing, I am grateful the Health Policy Committee is engaged in discussing this important legislation that recognizes the valuable services provided by physician assistants, certified nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists-certified in providing evidence-based mental health services to Michiganders. I urge you to vote in support of SB 0826 which expands the definition of mental health professional by including physician assistants, certified nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists-certified as mental health professions. This update reflects current practices and will reduce delays in mental health services.

Sincerely,

Carla J. Groh

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