



www.illinoispa.org



www.PAtientsFirstIllinois.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Contact: Dan Shomon, danflak@aol.com, 773-339-0476 – cell

PAtients First!!! Legislation Would Enable Physician Assistants to Provide Better Health Care in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD, Illinois -- Legislation to modernize the role of physician assistants (PAs) and expand healthcare access in Illinois has been introduced in the Illinois General Assembly and has already gained a growing and bipartisan group of legislative sponsors.

The legislation – called **PAtients First!!!** – is filed as Senate Bill 2758 and House Bill 4692.

“PAs should be able to practice medicine using the full extent of their license and this legislation will help reach that goal.”

*~ Kathleen Willis
Assistant House Majority Leader*

“My father receives his medical care at the Veterans Administration where PAs operate without regulatory burdens that we have in the State of Illinois,” said Assistant House Majority Leader Kathleen Willis, D-Melrose Park, the chief sponsor of House Bill 4692. “PAs should be able to practice medicine using the full extent of their license and this legislation will help reach that goal.”

“The more than 3,000 physician assistants (PAs) in Illinois face daily struggles due to outdated practice laws and unnecessary bureaucracy,” said Deputy Senate Majority Leader Laura Murphy, D-Des Plaines, chief sponsor of Senate Bill 2758. “Illinois is losing physician assistant jobs to neighboring states and these high-quality health care positions should stay in our state by decreasing the bureaucracy PAs face.”

“The more than 3,000 physician assistants (PAs) in Illinois face daily struggles due to outdated practice laws and unnecessary bureaucracy.”

*~ Laura Murphy
Deputy Senate Majority Leader*

~ continued ~

Southern Illinois University, which supports the legislation, indicates that for the first time ever, some PAs from the last two years of graduates have had difficulty finding jobs while the number of nurse practitioners nearly tripled in Illinois.

This legislation is urgently needed because federal Health and Human Services data shows that Illinois' distribution of PAs to population is relatively low – in the range of 17-37 PAs per 100,000 *working-age* residents. This is lower than several of the surrounding states, including WI, MI, IA, and MN. Studies by HHS and Brookings Institution have found that practice barriers for physician assistants restrict health care access and removing them will improve patient care, Willis and Murphy said.

PATients First!!! eliminates patient care barriers for PAs and their collaborating physicians by:

- Eliminating required state notifications and specific “written” agreements. However, PAs will still need to collaborate with physicians in order to practice. This is NOT independent practice!
- Determining scope of practice at the practice level based on the PA's individual education, training and experience.
- Allowing PAs to have a seat at the table in front of state regulators and self-govern the profession by establishing a PA oversight board. Currently, PAs have no representation before the state.

North Dakota has already removed its PAs' legal tie to physicians (including practice agreement) except PAs with fewer than 4,000 practice hours who own their own practice. North Dakota already had a PA on the medical board. West Virginia removed the requirement for a specific collaborating physician in hospital settings (affects 50% of PAs in the state). They already had two PAs on the medical board. Michigan, Iowa, Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Utah and Texas: All states with their own PA Medical Boards that regulate the PA profession.

House cosponsors of the bill include Rep. Mary Flowers, D-Chicago; Rep. Randy Frese, R-Paloma; Rep. Emanuel Chris Welch, D-Maywood; Rep. Terri Bryant, R-Murphysboro; Rep. David Severin, R-Benton; Rep. Amy Grant, R-Wheaton; Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth, D-Peoria; Rep. Justin Slaughter, D-Chicago; Rep. Diane Pappas, D-Itasca; Rep. Eva Dina Delgado, D-Chicago; Rep. John Cabello, R-Machesney Park; Rep. Monica Bristow, D-Alton; Rep. Charles Meier, R-Okawville; Rep. Katie Stuart, D-Edwardsville; Rep. Michael Halpin, D-Rock Island; Rep. Jawaharial Williams, D-Chicago; Rep. LaToya Greenwood, D-East St. Louis; Rep. Daniel Swanson, R-Alpha; and Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago. Senate cosponsors include Senator Patrick Joyce, D-Essex.

More information on PATients First is available at <http://www.PATientsFirstIllinois.org>. The website also provides an easy way for physicians to submit letters supporting PATients First legislation to Illinois legislators.

~ end ~