



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Allow Physician Assistants to Serve as PCPs for Medicaid Managed Care Plans

A6056 (Gottfried)/S.5956 (Rivera)

May 2, 2022

The Community Health Care Association of New York State (CHCANYS) writes in strong support of A.6056 (Gottfried)/S.5956 (Rivera), which would allow physician assistants (PAs) to serve as primary care practitioners (PCPs) for Medicaid managed care plans.

CHCANYS is the statewide association of New York's 70+ federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), also known as community health centers (CHCs). Located in low-income and medically underserved communities, CHCs provide a full range of primary and preventive health care and enabling services for more than 2.1 million patients at over 800 sites, regardless of insurance, immigration status, or ability to pay. Among CHC patients, 90% are low-income, 68% are people of color (35% Hispanic/Latinx, 26% Black, and 7% other), 13% are uninsured, and 59% are enrolled in Medicaid or Child Health Plus.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing workforce shortages that FQHCs and other primary care clinics were facing prior to the pandemic. FQHCs operate in health provider shortage areas (HPSAs) where primary care workforce capacity is stretched to its limits. Workforce shortages have been further impacted by increased stress and high levels of provider burnout. Expanding the provider types that can serve as PCPs for Medicaid patients to include PAs will help to mitigate some of the workforce shortages that FQHCs are facing.

Physician assistants are vital providers of primary care. Federally qualified health centers rely on PAs, particularly in communities where it is difficult to recruit or retain other provider types. Physician assistants operate at the top of their license, conducting physical exams, diagnosing and treating illnesses, ordering and interpreting tests, prescribing medications, and counseling patients on care plans and preventive health care. No different from physicians and NP PCPs, patients form trusting relationships with their PAs.

It is time for New York to expand the Medicaid managed care primary care practitioner definition to include physician assistants as eligible primary care practitioners. Physician assistants are already recognized as PCPs by Medicare and commercial insurers for the vital role they play in delivering comprehensive whole person health care services. **CHCANYS strongly supports A.6056/S.5956 and encourages its swift passage in the Assembly and Senate.**

For more information, contact Marie Mongeon, Senior Director of Policy, at mmongeon@chcanys.org.