

to read as follows:

Article 77A - Higher Education

61B.

(A) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES THAT:

(1) THERE IS A SHORTAGE AND MALDISTRIBUTION OF PRIMARY CARE PRACTITIONERS IN THE STATE OF MARYLAND. AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THIS PROBLEM, THE HEALTH NEEDS OF THE STATE, IN PARTICULAR THE RURAL AND INNER CITY AREAS, ARE NOT BEING MET.

(2) ONE OF THE MECHANISMS OF ALLEVIATING THE SHORTAGE AND MALDISTRIBUTION IS TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF PROVIDERS. THE UTILIZATION OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS HAS BEEN FOUND TO INCREASE THE QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY OF MEDICAL CARE.

(3) THE PROBLEMS IN PRIMARY CARE SERVICES AVAILABILITY WITHIN THE STATE CAN BE ATTENUATED BY INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS WITHIN THE STATE. THIS FACT HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED BY THE SUCCESSFUL PILOT TRAINING PROGRAMS CURRENTLY OPERATING IN THE STATE WHERE THE GRADUATES ARE FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY IN THE MEDICAL CARE SYSTEM IN AREAS OF NEED.

(4) THE STATE HAS RECOGNIZED THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MARYLAND FAMILY PRACTICE RESIDENCY PROGRAMS AND LEGISLATION ENABLING THE DELEGATION OF TASKS TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS THAT IT HAS A ROLE IN ASSURING THE AVAILABILITY OF PRIMARY CARE RESOURCES AND THAT THIS ROLE HAS A HIGH PRIORITY.

(5) THE COST OF EDUCATING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS FAR EXCEEDS THE TUITION REVENUE RECEIVED BY TRAINING INSTITUTIONS. ALTHOUGH THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF TRAINING FOR A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT OR NURSE PRACTITIONER IS LESS THAN THAT OF EDUCATING A PHYSICIAN, AN INTENSIVE CLINICAL EDUCATION IS STILL REQUIRED.

(6) IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO PROVIDE FOR A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS RECEIVING TRAINING IN PRIMARY CARE.

(B) (1) IN THIS SECTION, THE FOLLOWING WORDS AND PHRASES HAVE THE MEANINGS INDICATED.

(2) "PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT" MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL TO WHOM DUTIES ARE DELEGATED BY A LICENSED PHYSICIAN IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATIONS PROMULGATED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF ~~§423~~ 122 (6) OF ARTICLE 43 OF THIS CODE.