

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

(2) "MEDICAL EDUCATION CENTER" MEANS AN INSTITUTION:

(I) WHOSE OBJECTIVES INCLUDE THE EDUCATION OF MEDICAL AND ALLIED HEALTH PERSONNEL; AND

(II) THAT HAS RESIDENCY PROGRAMS OR FULL DEPARTMENTS IN AT LEAST THREE PRIMARY CARE AREAS.

(3) "NURSE PRACTITIONER" MEANS A NURSE PRACTITIONER AS DEFINED BY THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS OF NURSES.

(4) "PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT" MEANS AN INDIVIDUAL TO WHOM DUTIES ARE DELEGATED BY A LICENSED PHYSICIAN UNDER THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS.

(5) "PRIMARY CARE" MEANS FAMILY PRACTICE, GENERAL INTERNAL MEDICINE, AND GENERAL PEDIATRICS.

(B) STATEMENT OF POLICY.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS THAT:

(1) THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH PRIMARY CARE PRACTITIONERS IN THIS STATE, PARTICULARLY IN THE RURAL AND INNER CITY AREAS;

(2) ONE WAY TO ALLEVIATE THIS PROBLEM IS TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF PROVIDERS BY USING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS;

(3) ANOTHER WAY TO ALLEVIATE THIS PROBLEM IS BY INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS IN THIS STATE AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE SUCCESSFUL PILOT TRAINING PROGRAMS CURRENTLY OPERATING IN THIS STATE WHERE THE GRADUATES ARE FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY IN THE MEDICAL CARE SYSTEM IN AREAS OF NEED;

(4) THIS STATE HAS RECOGNIZED THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MARYLAND FAMILY PRACTICE RESIDENCY PROGRAMS AND LEGISLATION PERMITTING PHYSICIANS TO DELEGATE TASKS TO PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS THAT IT HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN ASSURING THAT PRIMARY CARE RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE;

(5) THE COST OF EDUCATING A PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT OR NURSE PRACTITIONER IS MORE THAN THE TUITION RECEIVED AND ALTHOUGH LESS THAN THE COST OF EDUCATING A PHYSICIAN, IT IS STILL EXPENSIVE; AND

(6) THE NUMBER OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS AND NURSE PRACTITIONERS TRAINED IN PRIMARY CARE SHOULD BE INCREASED.