

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Committee on Health Care

FROM: Emily Hawes, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health

DATE: February 18, 2026

RE: Written Testimony on H.573

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) does not support lowering professional standards or broadening scope of practice exclusively within mental health. Any changes to licensure or authority should be applied consistently across health care disciplines and grounded in evidence and patient safety.

DMH supports the current practice allowing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to complete first certifications under the authority granted in 26 V.S.A. § 1616, together with additional specialized training developed by DMH.

If statute were amended to broaden Physician Assistants' (PAs) scope of medical practice, in a manner similar to the authority provided to APRNs under 26 V.S.A. § 1616, DMH would support including PAs as eligible designees to complete a first certification under that authority. As with physicians and APRNs who do not specialize in psychiatry, DMH would require PAs to complete specialized training prior to designation. DMH would also review existing training requirements to determine whether modifications or enhancements would be necessary to ensure PAs are appropriately knowledgeable to complete first certifications.

DMH does not support the expansion of designation outside of medical professionals.

DMH does not support any changes to the process of second certification.

