

Date: June 21, 2024

To: House Health Provider Services Committee
From: Ohio Association of Physician Assistants
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Subject: Opposition to Ohio House Bill 102

Chair Oelslager, Vice-Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani and esteemed members of the Ohio House Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on House Bill 102 on behalf of the Ohio Association of Physician Assistants (OAPA).

Formed in 1978, the OAPA provides a foundation for the physician assistant (PA) profession for the state of Ohio. This organization promotes quality, cost-effective, accessible health care through the physician assistant – physician team approach.

H.B. 102 proponents have stated that this bill addresses a provider shortage for people with cardiopulmonary disease. The bill aims to solve the issue by creating a new, niche profession, one that would take years to become sufficiently established to address the shortage in Ohio.

Rather than starting from scratch, we recommend relying on existing advanced practice providers who are already trained and ready. A PA is a member of the healthcare team who is trained, nationally certified, and state licensed to practice medicine in collaboration with a supervising physician across health care settings, including in cardio-pulmonary care. They are required to supplement their training and experience with continuing medical education plus additional pharmacology credits. PA students complete 2,000 hours of clinical rotations, including in internal medicine, and pass a national board certification exam, among other rigorous requirements.

Across Ohio, there are already many PAs working in critical care with knowledge of ventilation management as well as the systemic and medications that could affect the patient, and some health systems offering critical care fellowship for PAs. Ohio has 17 PA training programs, which equates to hundreds of graduating students each year, and yet too many of them elect to pursue their careers in other states with less restrictive scope of practice laws. Ohio's antiquated PA practice barriers are deterrents for employers to hire PAs.

Instead of creating more government bureaucracy, we ask you to eliminate outdated policies that limit PAs from providing comprehensive health services to the people of Ohio.

Suggested improvements to existing law regarding PA practice include:

- Eliminating the statutory clause that makes a physician liable for a PAs mistake, which discourages physicians from entering into supervision agreements with PAs
- Removing the requirement for on-site supervision of a PA by a physician for the first 500 hours of practice, which also makes new graduate PAs undesirable candidates for employers who do not have the full-time physician workforce to provide the oversight
- Eliminating or increasing the ratio of PAs to supervising physicians
- Removing the statutory ban on PA advertising
- Adding PAs to the Ohio Preceptor Tax Incentive for taking PA (and/or NP students)

Taking these straightforward, common sense actions could help to address provider shortages in cardio-pulmonary care *and beyond*. As stated, PAs have comprehensive advanced practice medical training and are well-equipped to work across specialties.

The desire to create a new profession to solve a problem that Ohio PAs are already poised to address - if not for Ohio's restrictive PA practice laws - is frustrating. Across multiple General Assemblies, our suggestions for legislative improvements to make Ohio the premier state for PA practice have been challenged. Legislators have told us that changing the PA scope of practice is too hard, yet this bill seeks to develop an entirely new profession full of scope considerations.

We respectfully oppose this bill and ask that the committee consider the opportunity you have in front of you - nearly 6,000 Ohio licensed PAs, hundreds of students in Ohio PA programs, and PAs in other states who may be drawn to the Ohio workforce if practice barriers are removed and the opportunity to meet critical needs, including cardio-pulmonary care, abounds. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.