



Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants

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PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE HEARING OCTOBER 1, 2009 TESTIMONY BY DREW MORTEN CONNECTICUT ACADEMY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Chairman Kissel and Chairwoman Mushinsky, Members of the Committee:

My name is Drew Morten. I am here today representing the Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA). There are over 1300 PAs practicing in Connecticut. I too am a practicing PA. In my current position, I provide health care on site to employees at Cartus Corporation in Danbury.

I have been a PA for over 30 years and have worked in general surgery, urology, family practice and occupational medicine settings. I am also a Past President of ConnAPA.

We appreciate the Committee's interest in this important and complex issue. Professional organizations and their members face a difficult task when bringing forth proposed changes to scope of practice. We welcome the work of this Committee as a breath of fresh air.

One of the most painful components of seeking new legislative recognition is dealing with the protectionism and turf battles that can sometimes ensue. The critical legislative changes necessary to promote better patient care often take several years to bring to fruition.

ConnAPA strives to maintain positive working relationships with other health care organizations in the state so that any potential areas of disagreement regarding scope of practice can be resolved favorably and expediently. We are fortunate to have an excellent relationship with the Connecticut State Medical Society, the Connecticut Association of Family Practice and the Connecticut Orthopedic Society. All three organizations allow PAs to hold an affiliate membership.

We have achieved this level of camaraderie partly as a result of our diligence in keeping our physician colleagues informed of our proposed agenda before each legislative cycle.

Most importantly, the work of this Committee is timely considering the likelihood that health care reform will bring greater demands on primary care practices. The General Assembly is certain to be asked by Washington to evaluate its scope of practice laws to accommodate a greater role for non-physician practitioners. Such work could be accomplished more expediently through a new model of legislative review.

In many other states, the legislature delegates the authority to regulate physician assistant scope of practice to a regulatory body. Most commonly, this body is either a board of physician assistants, or if no separate PA board exists, PAs are commonly regulated by the state medical board. The make-up of these boards is established by statute and varies from state to state, but all include expert medical professionals. These boards must operate within the authority established by the legislature. PA

regulatory boards are commonly charged with licensing PAs, disciplining PAs who commit violations, and most importantly to the work of this Committee, establishing regulations governing PA scope of practice. However, because of the unique relationship between PAs and supervising physicians, many state regulations simply state that PA scope of practice shall be determined by delegation decisions by the supervising physician. This is not possible for other health professions, but it is a key element of PA practice.

Our experience with the legislature has assured us that the Assembly is well focused on the goal of improving care in Connecticut. However, being besieged by many conflicting opinions and recommendations makes deliberation a more difficult process. Therefore, ConnAPA agrees that the current process of seeking redefinition of scope of practice needs to be reviewed and abbreviated. We strongly support the Program Review and Investigations Committee's study of the existing process.

As health care professionals also committed to improving all aspects of health care for Connecticut residents, the Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants is prepared to work with you to meet those goals.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Drew Morten", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Drew Morten, Past President
Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants