



Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants

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TESTIMONY by the
Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA)
for the
Public Health Committee Public Hearing
on
Raised S.B. 428, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Public Health Related Statutes

March 12, 2010

Senator Harris and Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

The Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA) is the professional society representing all physician assistants in Connecticut. Physician Assistants (PAs) are licensed healthcare professionals who practice medicine with physician supervision. The Academy serves as the collective voice for over 1600 PAs practicing in Connecticut. A major component of our mission is to provide accessible, high quality, cost-effective healthcare to the CT residents we serve. We care for patients across the age continuum from pediatric to geriatric populations in all care settings including primary care, internal medicine, and surgery. We accomplish this by working collaboratively with our supervising physician colleagues. In 2008, census data revealed this medical care by Connecticut PAs amounted to nearly 4 million individual patient contacts.

The Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants submits this written testimony because we wish to go on the record as in favor of Raised S.B. 428, An Act Concerning Revisions to the Public Health Related Statutes. We are pleased with the efforts of the legislature, which are aimed at revising certain parts of statutes that are antiquated and at clarifying and modifying existing statutes.

Specifically, ConnAPA is in support of Section 18, which contains the substitute language for subsection (a) of section 20-87a of the general statutes. Physician assistants pride themselves on being team players and working with many different types of workers across the healthcare spectrum. Aside from our supervising physician colleagues, nurses are the next closest profession with whom we interact. We support the addition of the word "physician assistants" as a profession under which, at our direction, nurses can execute the medical regimen. We believe it is appropriate for the public health statutes to reflect current practice, a practice solidified legally by a 1985 opinion of the Attorney General. In 1985, then Connecticut Attorney General Joseph Lieberman ruled that, when it passed enabling legislation for the practice of physician assistants, it was the intent of the state legislature to create an "agency" relationship between the physician and the physician assistant being supervised. The legal concept of agency clarifies the delegated authority of the PA such that "when the PA acts, it is as if the physician acted". The attorney general's opinion provided the needed clarity that it is indeed legally appropriate for nurses to execute medical regimens ordered by PAs. Updating this part of the general statutes seems logical.

We commend the legislature's effort to include physician assistants in healthcare statutes such as these. In addition, we look forward to being represented in future statute clarifications that are deemed necessary and to being at the table for future healthcare legislative initiatives.

ConnAPA thanks the committees for its time and consideration, and this opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Kohlhepp".

William C. Kohlhepp, PA-C
Government Affairs Co-Chair
Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants