



Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants

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TESTIMONY by the

Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA)

Before the

The Public Health Committee Public Hearing

On

H.B. 5515 “AN ACT CONCERNING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS”

Wednesday, March 21, 2012 at 10:00

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the committee:

The Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA) strongly supports House Bill 5515, *An Act Concerning Physician Assistants*. This is the product of months of work and discussion by a Scope of Practice Committee that was created last summer as a result of Public Act 11-209. The Scope of Practice Committee met several times last fall and came to an agreement on two key elements that will enable Physician Assistants to practice more effectively in the state of Connecticut. The Department of Public Health has agreed to these changes.

- First, our current statute requires face-to-face meetings with our supervising physician on a weekly basis. This has been overly prescriptive. The change proposed here is that these meetings will still occur but their frequency will be left to the determination of each supervising physician and Physician Assistant.
- Second, our current statute requires that our supervising physician document their approval of a schedule II or III controlled substance prescription within one calendar day after it is written by a Physician Assistant. Again, this is overly prescriptive. The change proposed here is that this documentation will still occur but in a manner that is determined by each supervising physician.

Both of these elements will be included in the written protocol that is developed and signed by the supervising physician and Physician Assistant. The written protocol is our “road map”, so to speak, of the duties and functions we undertake and how we practice. Each physician practices differently. That’s why it makes sense to set broad standards in statute that can be adapted on a case-by-case basis by individual supervising physicians.

Lines 66 through 86 of the bill establish broad requirements for the information that needs to be included in the written protocol. Each document will specifically address the two elements we have outlined above. But, how they are addressed will be left to the supervising physician’s discretion. Taken together, these two changes simply allow us to practice more efficiently. Patients will be protected. The level of care will be enhanced. These are win-win changes for everyone and we are pleased the Scope of Practice Committee has adopted them.

We have one technical improvement to the bill to suggest. ConnAPA would ask the Public Health committee to change the term “written protocol” to “written delegation agreement.” This conforms the term to how it is referenced by our profession nationally. We believe state policymakers do not want a true clinical protocol, but rather want to formalize a physician’s professional affiliation with a PA. This view is shared by the American Medical Association, whose policy calls for “mutually agreed upon guidelines that are developed by the physician and the physician assistant.”

In medicine, the term “protocol” is generally used to describe a specific clinical regimen – for example a “medication protocol” used to treat a specific condition. When the Connecticut PA legislation was initially enacted in 1980 there was not yet consensus on language used to describe agreements between PAs and their supervising physicians. In 2012 “written delegation agreement” is an accepted term of art, and better describes the nature and purpose of the document. The change in terminology is technical in nature. It does not expand what the PA can be delegated nor diminish the role of the supervising physician. Our request is simply that the term “written protocol” is replaced by “written delegation agreement.” The definition and requirements for the document would remain the same.

To conclude, ConnAPA believes HB 5515 is a good proposal that warrants the committee’s support. We look forward to working with you on this legislation as the 2012 session proceeds. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Weber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jonathan M. Weber, MA, PA-C
Government Affairs Chair
Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants