



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
House Bill 5625, (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFINITION OF SURGERY

February 23, 2015

The Honorable Terry B Gerratana
The Honorable Matthew Ritter
Co-Chairs, Public Health Committee

Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee:

The Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA) is the professional society representing physician assistants (PAs) in Connecticut. ConnAPA serves as the collective voice for over 1900 PAs licensed in Connecticut. PAs provide accessible, high quality, cost-effective healthcare to CT residents. PAs care for patients across the age continuum from pediatric to geriatric within all care settings and medical specialties. We accomplish this by collaborating with physician colleagues within a team-based health practice model.

ConnAPA submits this written testimony in strong opposition to the proposed legislation defining surgery. Very simply, PAs practice as vital team members in many formal operating room cases and perform many procedures that would be included in this new definition of "surgery." ConnAPA believes the language included in this bill is inaccurate and unnecessary. As proposed, the overly-broad language of HB 5625 would pull many standard procedures performed by PAs on a daily basis, such as injections, wound care and cauterization into the definition of surgery. As described in the bill, relocation of a dislocated shoulder and freezing of a wart would be considered to be "surgery." ConnAPA is concerned that this effort will ultimately result in the restriction of these activities to a specific class of providers. We are also concerned that PAs will be unnecessarily prohibited from performing procedures that are currently part of our education, training and professional responsibilities.

As proposed, HB 5625 creates more questions than answers. HB 5625 may potentially interfere with previous work achieved by the Public Health Committee. Specifically, SB418, which was the end result of a long and drawn out conflict over medical spas, passed into law late in 2014 and included a definition of "Cosmetic Medical Procedures." As defined by SB418, PAs are allowed to perform "Cosmetic Medical Procedures." However, the definition of surgery proposed in HB 5625 would be in direct conflict with the newly enacted statutory language defining cosmetic medical procedures.

ConnAPA is concerned that the basic legislative intent or consequence of HB 5625 is to move toward limiting those who can perform surgery as it is defined and circumvent the formal process put into place by Public Act 11-209, *An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Oversight and Responsibilities Relating to Scope of Practice Determinations for Healthcare Professions*. Thus, our position is that there is simply no basis or defined need for taking this action. ConnAPA has significant concerns that a definition of surgery would ultimately lead to:

- Major declines in access to care
- Increased healthcare costs
- Limitations of PA practice
- Loss of PA workforce

ConnAPA respectfully requests that the Public Health Committee oppose HB 5625 and request that it be submitted to the DPH scope of practice review process if the Committee sees fit. If that is the case, ConnAPA respectfully requests representation on either a DPH review committee or special task force to fully participate in further deliberations on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Weber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

Jonathan Weber, PA-C
Chair, Legislative Affairs
Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants