



Further Written Testimony in Support of, and Seeking Amendment to, H.B. 5129

To: Public Health Committee

From: Christine O'Connor, Senior Counsel
National Healthcareer Association (NHA)

Date: February 22, 2016

Subject: **H.B. 5129, An Act Concerning the Administration of Vaccines by Pharmacists and Medical Assistants and the Listing of Certified Medical Assistants**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for receiving both NHA's oral and written testimony concerning **H.B. 5129, An Act Concerning the Administration of Vaccines by Pharmacists and Medical Assistants and the Listing of Certified Medical Assistants** provided on February 16, 2016. NHA offers the following further testimony.

At the conclusion of my oral testimony, having run out of time, I mentioned that H.B. 5129 fails to provide a pathway for medical assistants who obtain their training through military service to participate in the enlarged scope of practice for medical assistants contemplated by the proposed legislation. I write now to provide the Committee additional information about armed forces trained medical assistants.

NHA's mission is to empower people to access a better future. One way we bring that mission to life is to support veterans and their families in obtaining certification in allied health fields for which they have been trained, either by the military or through a military cooperative training program, so that they are better able to join the civilian work force upon discharge. Such training is typically evidenced by Joint Service Transcripts, discharge paperwork (form DD214) and evaluations by superior officers. Section 2.a.2(B) of H.B. 5129, as written, may exclude qualified medical assistants who received non-traditional postsecondary training.

Accordingly, although NHA supports the proposed legislation H.B. 5129, it also suggests that the following amendments be made:

1. Add National Healthcareer Association to the group of certifying organizations specifically named in Section 2.a.2(A), as previously requested;
2. As previously described in NHA's written testimony, change Section 2.a.2(A) to correct a technical error about the role of NCCA to state the following: ". . . or other certification organizations offering a medical assistant certification accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, . . .";
3. Amend Section 2.a.2(B) to include training obtained through the U.S. military as follows: ". . . or the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges or completed a military medical services training program in medical assisting or its equivalent, offered by a branch of the United States armed forces."; and
4. Add National Healthcareer Association to the group of certifying organizations specifically named in Section 3 as previously requested.

Additionally, I have attached a copy of the letter in support NHA submitted to members of the Committee concerning the 2015 Senate Bill 981 An Act Concerning Medical Assistants, as referenced in both the initial written testimony and oral testimony provided on February 16, 2016.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on this bill.

March 19, 2015

The Honorable Terry Gerratana
Co-Chair, Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3002
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: SB-981 – In Support/Related Concern with respect to Public Act 04-82

Dear Senator Gerratana:

We write to bring your attention to two matters: (1) our support for and suggested addition to SB-981; and (2) public confusion caused by the limited applicability of Public Act 04-82, attached here for your convenience.

Support for SB-981 and Proposed Modification of Section 1(a)

The National Healthcareer Association (NHA) is in support of SB-981, which, if enacted, would establish a pilot program in which medical assistants may administer medication under the orders and supervision of a licensed health care provider. The proposed definition of a “medical assistant” in Section 1(a) includes a requirement to be “certified by the American Association of Medical Assistants or the American Medical Technologists.”

Certification ensures that medical assistants have uniform competencies, have made a personal and proven investment in their profession, and have demonstrated a commitment to patient and public safety. The proposed list of national certifying organizations is incomplete. There are four national certifications for medical assistants, each of which serves a near-equal share of the market and all of which are accredited by the same body, the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), a division of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. In addition to the organizations named in the bill, the National Healthcareer Association (NHA) and the National Center for Competency Testing (NCCT) provide nationally-recognized and accredited medical assistant certifications. Accordingly, NHA respectfully requests that the Committee amend the bill to add both NHA and NCCT to the list of certifying organizations in Section 1(a) or, in lieu of naming specific organizations, simply state “certified by a national certification provider that has been accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).”

NCCA-accredited certification programs must comply with rigorous guidelines surrounding examination design and development, psychometric defensibility, exam administration, and item security. NCCA states that “NCCA standards are consistent with The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999).”¹ NCCA accreditation assures regulatory agencies, employers, and other stakeholders that the quality of the certification program has been thoroughly scrutinized by an impartial accrediting agency. In turn, NHA’s Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) credential assures the public that the medical assistants who support the

¹ Available at <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org/ncca>.

physicians and nurses in the delivery of medical care have demonstrated knowledge associated with critical competencies.

Public Confusion Caused by Public Act 04-82 and Proposal to Correct via SB-981

Public Act 04-82 requires that "the Commissioner of Public Health [annually] shall obtain from the American Association of Medical Assistants, a listing of all state residents maintained on said organization's registry of certified medical assistants. The commissioner shall make such listing available for public inspection." This is the sole purpose of Public Act 04-82. As you know, until proposed legislation SB-981 is enacted, medical assistant certification is not required under the laws of Connecticut. By limiting the public listing available from the Department of Public Health to one of four certification providers, most certified medical assistants in Connecticut are excluded from the list. Many employers falsely assume that only medical assistants on this list are permitted to practice in Connecticut or that only medical assistants on this list hold valid certifications and credentials. Additionally, patients who are unable to find a medical assistant that has attended or is attending to them on the DPH list may be unnecessarily alarmed.

Similarly, the DPH website posts advice regarding the scope of practice of medical assistants, including the passage "Please select this link for information regarding Connecticut residents certified by the American Association of Medical Assistants."² NHA has received calls from educational institutions and employers who believe that because this statement is exclusive to AAMA, the Department accepts only AAMA's certification for use in the state. Accordingly, NHA requested that the DPH insert a clarifying statement on its website. The DPH declined to do so, citing limitations imposed by Public Act 04-82.

We propose that SB-981, or a separately introduced bill, include provisions that will eliminate the confusion caused by Public Act 04-82. This can be achieved either by amending Public Act 04-82 to require that the DPH list all certified medical assistants credentialed by any of the four NCCA-accredited certification providers or by sunseting Public Act 04-82, instead relying on the requirement that all NCCA-accredited certification providers must provide a method for the public to affirm the current status of each person to whom it has issued credentials.

NHA has certified over 450,000 allied health professionals since 1989 and works directly with leading educational institutions and medical employers across the United States, including in Connecticut. These organizations believe that having their medical assistants undergo the rigors of preparing and sitting for a nationally recognized competency examination adds value to their organizations and helps safeguard the public at large. Although each certification provider has psychometrically sound exams and secure test administration, as evidenced by their NCCA accreditation, educational institutions, medical employers, and medical assistants seeking credentials each have many reasons for selecting a preferred certification provider. NHA's reputation for being a leader in customer service and solution-focused innovation is often cited by its customers. Additionally, NHA's CCMA certification is recognized by government agencies in New Jersey, North Dakota, and Washington as a way to satisfy regulatory requirements related to medical assistant certification.

² http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3121&q=389366&dphNav_GID=1821

We respectfully request your "yes" vote, along with our proposed amendments to Section 1(a), when SB-981 is brought before you and the Public Health Committee. We thank you for your attention to this matter of public health and safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Dahir". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Dahir, General Manager
National Healthcareer Association

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