

Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants

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Statement of Deanna Cichon Zimkus

Public Health Committee
Senate Bill 300
March 16, 2018

Sen. Gerratana, Sen. Somers, Rep. Steinberg and members of the committee:

My name is Deanna Cichon Zimkus. I am a licensed Physician Assistant practicing full-time in Wolcott, and also currently serve as the president of the Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA). I graduated in 2009 from the Quinnipiac University PA program.

I am here today to speak in support of Senate Bill 300, *An Act Concerning Collaborative Arrangements Between Physician Assistants and Physicians*.

Very simply, Senate Bill 300 will modernize the statutes that govern Physician Assistants. The PA profession is now more than 50 years old and in that time the landscape of healthcare delivery has drastically changed. PAs have proven their value as key members of the health care team.

A number of studies have shown that PAs provide increased access to quality, cost-effective healthcare. The current supervisory requirement was written at a time when healthcare delivery was vastly different. There are far fewer physician-owned practices, as corporations or hospital systems, in which both physicians and PAs are employees, own a drastically increasing number of practices. Antiquated supervision laws impose unnecessary burdens on physicians and employers that limit patient access to care.

Other states have moved in the direction of having collaborative arrangements between PAs and Medical Doctors. These include New Mexico, Michigan, West Virginia, and Alaska, which has utilized collaborative relationships for decades. To be clear, PAs are *not* seeking independent practice. One of the main pillars of the PA profession is exceptional working relationships with physicians. PAs are trained to work in a collaborative manner with all members of the healthcare team.

By changing the relationship to one of collaboration, it will improve current language, which holds physicians liable for care provided by a PA. PAs, just as other healthcare providers, are accountable for their own clinical decision-making, and this needs to be appropriately reflected. This concern for liability is one of the hindrances to patient access to care, as a growing number of physicians are uncomfortable accepting responsibility for the actions of a PA within a practice that they do not have ownership of, but instead are an employee of.

ConnAPA submitted a request for a scope of practice committee review in 2016 and 2017, with substantial supporting information. Though the Department of Public Health complemented the submissions, the request was not selected for a full committee review in either year.

Modernization of the Physician Assistant practice act is critically needed to keep pace with the changing health care landscape. The word “supervision” no longer accurately depicts the professional relationship between PAs and physicians and diminishes the role we play in the healthcare workforce.

To close, ConnAPA’s request to you today for a collaborative arrangement will result in a more efficient healthcare system. PAs in Connecticut already serve citizens daily with high-quality care across the healthcare spectrum. This modernization will enable PAs to serve patients optimally and more efficiently. That’s the bottom line.

ConnAPA urges your support for Senate Bill 300. Thank you all for listening to my testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.