

# Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-285

**Title:** AN ACT ALLOWING MEDICAL ASSISTANTS TO ADMINISTER VACCINES.

**Vote Date:** 2/22/2021

**Vote Action:** JOINT FAVORABLE

**PH Date:** 2/8/2021

**File No.:** 33

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

The Public Health Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This legislation allows medical assistants meeting specified certification, education, and training requirements to administer vaccines in any setting other than a hospital. They may administer a vaccine only if acting under the supervision, control, and responsibility of a physician or APRN. In addition, this bill specifies that an employer may not require physicians or APRNs, without their consent, to oversee medical assistants administering vaccines.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

None

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

**American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) and the Connecticut Society of Medical Assistants (CT SMA):** The AAMMA and CT SMA offer strong support of this legislation. They believe that individuals who meet the definition of medical assistant in this bill should be permitted to administer vaccines. According to the written testimony, "the results of the enactment of this legislation would be an increase in the availability of vaccinations for Connecticut patients with no decrease in the quality of vaccinations or health care in general." They support the passage of this bill to increase the availability of vaccines to the people of Connecticut, with no decrease in the quality of vaccinations or health care in general.

**Robert Dudley, MD, MEd, FAAP, Immediate Past President, Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics:** Dr. Robert Dudley and the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics support this bill. This bill would allow trained professionals to help in the effort in providing COVID vaccines. Additionally, as stated in the testimony, "having the option of supervising MAs to give vaccines opens another avenue to improved healthcare. Doing so should not be seen as a threat to nursing staff, rather it is a way for practices to free them up to provide the care coordination and patient education that are the future of integrated care." Passing this legislation will improve overall healthcare practices in the state of Connecticut.

**Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS):** CSMS strongly supports the passage of this legislation. According to the testimony, in 2012, CSMS actively participated in evaluating the potential of allowing credentialed medical assistants to administer vaccines and other medications. A final report on the process was submitted to the Public Health Committee on February 1, 2013. CSMS believes that the final report offered "information supporting a careful expansion of the role of the MA in physician offices." Especially due to the pandemic, this bill is critical to allow physicians the ability to delegate appropriate procedures to qualified medical assistants. CSMS supports this bill because the administration of vaccines would occur under the direct supervision of a physician, with full understanding that the patient has been evaluated by the physician.

**Hartford County Medical Association:** Hartford County Medical Association and immediate past president Khuram Ghuman support the passing of this bill. This legislation is important to providing quality healthcare to Connecticut residents while continuing to face the complications and pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated in the testimony, there has been a decline in primary care physicians serving the state, and this bill would help broaden disciplinary teams of caregivers. Allowing certified medical assistants to administer vaccines is efficient, safe and "acts as a catalyst for improved care and access to treatment as it frees up physicians, physician assistants, advanced practice registered nurses and registered nurses so they engage patients with their highest skill level." Additionally, the testimony provided gives a background on medical assistants and physician delegation to medical assistants under current Connecticut law.

**Jennifer L. Schwab, M.D., F.A.A.P:** Dr. Jennifer L.Schwab, a primary care pediatrician and member of the Connecticut Children's Care Network, supports the passage of this legislation. As stated in the testimony, "Every state but Connecticut and New York currently allows medical assistants to administer vaccines. It is a simple, straightforward process and we, as medical doctors, are always on site to supervise if there are any problems." Additionally, allowing medical assistants to administer vaccines frees up more time to nurses to help with direct patient care. Passing this legislation would help improve the efficiency of medical practice, maintain fiscal sustainability, and aide in the accessibility of the COVID vaccine to people of Connecticut.

20 other individuals submitted testimony in favor of SB 285.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**John Brady, Vice President, AFT Connecticut, AFL-CIO:** Mr. Brady and AFT Connecticut are in opposition of the purposed bill. This is because medical assistants are not always

trained to do assessments and to administer medications, and as stated in the testimony, "nor does the State of Connecticut have the same oversight as it does over those it licenses. In addition, Medical Assistants Certifications are not issued by the state and cannot be revoked by the state. Certifications in Medical Assisting come from one of four associations, each with different criteria and training requirements." In conclusion, Mr. Brady and AFT Connecticut are opposed of the bill the protections that Connecticut residents deserve as far as guaranteed training and oversight of Healthcare Professionals who administer them medications.

**Margaret Cleary, RN BSN:** Margaret Clearly, a Registered Nurse at Danbury Hospital, is opposed to the passage of this legislation. Administering a vaccine is not a simple task and involves knowledge of pharmacology, anatomy, and most important assessment skills to evaluate for reactions or contraindications to the vaccine." As stated in the testimony, assessment skills are not a part of the medical assistant training. Registered Nurses have more extensive training and education in order to properly assess their patients. There are considerable risks in patient safety if medical assistants were allowed to administer them. Additionally, "it is inappropriate and inequitable to be placing higher levels of burden and responsibility on a less educated and extremely lower paid professional without increasing their pay and education along with the added responsibility."

**Donna Kosiorowski MS RN NCSN:** Donna Kosiorowski, a Registered Nurse with 50 years of experience in health care including Emergency Room, Intensive Care, and Pediatrics, is opposed to this bill. Administration of vaccines is a task that requires skill, knowledge, and judgment. It also requires the education on how to properly access a patient. As stated in the testimony, "Assessment is a competency that nurses are extensively trained to do. They are trained and taught to assess before, during and after vaccinating or medicating a person." Medical Assistants do not have the appropriate training for administering a vaccine. Now more than ever during a pandemic, it is important to offer the highest level of care to ensure the safety of patients.

5 other individuals submitted testimony in opposition of SB 285.

**Reported by: Kassandra Fruin**

**Date: 3/9/2021**