

May 8, 2024

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee,

My name is Matthew Freado, and I currently serve as the President of the Ohio Association of Physician Assistants or OAPA. I have worked as a PA or Physician Assistant for almost eight years. I am a full-time clinical lead PA practicing in emergency and ambulatory care here in central Ohio. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify as an interested party on Senate Bill 196. OAPA's primary goal is to promote quality, cost-effective, and accessible healthcare through the physician assistant-physician team approach.

We commend the Ohio State Medical Association and the Ohio Association of Advanced Practice Nurses for their collaborative efforts toward passing this legislation. We also appreciate Senator Roegner's support for this bill. This law is a prime example of a straightforward approach to significantly enhancing efficiency in patient care and hospital administration. PAs possess the training and experience to provide comprehensive healthcare to patients. Therefore, this bill should be amended to allow PAs to sign patient care forms, similar to our APRN colleagues.

For background, to become a PA, a student completes a 24-30-month Master's Degree program consisting of a rigorous curriculum modeled on the medical school curriculum that involves both didactic and clinical education training. Students take advanced medical sciences, behavioral sciences, and behavioral ethics courses in the didactic phase. In the clinical phase, students complete more than 2,000 hours of clinical rotations in medical and surgical disciplines, including family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, general surgery, emergency medicine, and psychiatry.

Upon graduation, PAs must pass a national certifying board exam to obtain a state license to practice medicine granted to them by the State Medical Board. The PA must also maintain their board certification every ten years and obtain 100 hours of continuing medical education every two years. Lastly, specifically in Ohio, PAs must also obtain an additional 12 Category I CME hours in pharmacology.

There are currently around 6,000 board-certified PAs in Ohio who practice in various specialties. PAs have played a significant role in improving the availability and quality of healthcare services for patients. However, despite their crucial contributions, certain obstacles still hinder their ability to provide optimal care. One such obstacle is the inability of PAs to sign certain forms related to patient care, which can cause unnecessary delays in the delivery of healthcare services to patients and excessive administrative burdens.

PAs and APRNs work together with our physician colleagues to provide quality healthcare to patients. To improve patient care and transparency and reduce bureaucratic delays, the General Assembly must amend S.B. 196 to include PAs in global signature authority. This would help maintain parity between PAs and NPs and ensure that both healthcare professionals can provide their services to patients promptly and effectively.

Thank you for your time and consideration.