HB 353 Proponent Testimony
House Health Committee
Chair Jean Schmidt
October 22, 2025

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about House Bill 353.

My name is Terri Weiland, and I am a Physician Assistant (PA) practicing in rural Ohio. I would like to address a critical issue facing not only the PA profession but also the healthcare delivery in our state, particularly in rural and underserved areas: the need for a title change from "Physician Assistant" to "Physician Associate."

In rural Ohio, healthcare providers like myself play an indispensable role in filling gaps where physicians are in short supply. In my area, patients often have to travel 45 minutes just to see a specialist. We're fortunate to have cardiology available now, but we're still severely lacking in specialized care, and recruitment of physicians remains a major challenge. PAs are high in demand, but our impact can be diminished due to misconceptions surrounding our title.

When patients hear the term "assistant," they immediately think of a subordinate role with limited authority. As a result, they may not fully understand the breadth of the care I provide. I hold a master's degree, am trained to diagnose, treat, and manage conditions across various specialties, and work in partnership with physicians to provide the highest quality care. To refer to myself as an assistant, despite my extensive education, training, and responsibilities, undermines the care I provide, to the detriment of patient confidence in my work.

The term "physician associate"is not only more accurate to align with our job description but would also help improve patient understanding. It more clearly conveys that we are integral members of the healthcare team, working closely with physicians and specialists. For those new to the profession, the title would also reflect the years of education and experience required to practice. Changing our title would better reflect the level of responsibility and training we bring to the healthcare system.

Ohio has an opportunity to lead the way here. By adopting the term "physician associate," Ohio could set an example for the rest of the country, showing that we are committed to elevating the healthcare workforce. This change would also support recruitment efforts, making it clearer to both potential employers and patients the significant role that PAs play in providing care.

In conclusion, changing the title to "physician associate" is more than just a matter of semantics, it's a matter of respect, clarity, and enhancing patient care. I urge you to take the lead and champion this change for Ohio. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Terri Weiland, MS, PA-C
Wooster, OH
Wayne County