

**Opponent Testimony to the Ohio House Health Committee
HB 353 – Physician Assistants
Presented by Monica Hueckel, VP, Advocacy, Ohio State Medical Association**

November 19, 2025

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, my name is Monica Hueckel and I am here on behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the state's oldest and largest professional organization representing Ohio physicians, medical residents, and medical students. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding House Bill 353 today. As you know, HB 353 proposes to change the professional title used by physician assistants (PAs) to "physician associate."

OSMA is deeply concerned about the efforts of HB 353 to change the official title of the physician assistant profession, believing it will cause patient confusion. In fact, confusion about the role of a physician assistant is already prevalent. About one-quarter of patients already wrongly believe that physician assistants are physicians or are unsure, according to national survey research done by the American Medical Association. Additionally, physicians often refer to their peer physicians as their associates, and in several states, patients may even receive care from an "associate physician" – which is a term used to describe individuals who have graduated from medical school but have not yet matched into a residency or post-graduate training program. We believe HB 353 would clearly only exacerbate patient confusion about who is providing their care. This is significant because we all know how much patients value and seek transparency in the health care system.

The proponents of this legislation claim that the "physician associate" title more accurately represents the independence that physician assistants have as providers. This is a confusing narrative, considering that in Ohio, physician assistants do not practice independently - they work under the supervision of a physician. The proponents also testified that occasionally when they introduce themselves to patients as a physician assistant, the patient asks when they will see the actual doctor. That is a common question in the healthcare space when a non-physician sees a patient, as the majority of Ohioans want to ensure their medical conditions are being managed by an actual physician. The proponents use this example as one that highlights the need for the title change. I actually believe this example only further highlights the confusion this change will bring and will lead patients to believe they are actually being seen by a MD or DO physician.

This proposed title change does not improve access to, cost of, or quality of health care for Ohioans. The term "physician assistant" has been commonly used in our health care infrastructure for decades. Not only is it the terminology used throughout federal statutes and regulations, but it is also widely used throughout our hospitals and other care facilities, and by our health care systems, practices, and health insurers. It is an embedded feature of our communications, directories, and identification badges, as well as many policies and procedures. Implementation of HB 353 would be a time-consuming and expensive endeavor pushed onto Ohio businesses and health care facilities without a demonstrated need or benefit to patients.

There is no evidence Ohio needs this title change for physician assistants. The proponents also claim this title change is a “trend” and highlighted legislation that passed in Maine, Oregon, and New Hampshire. I actually believe more of a trend is the fact that since 2021, 47 states have opted not to adopt or consider this title change legislation.

Ultimately, we do not see why this change is necessary, and we are troubled that the title change proposed by HB 353 is a needless rebrand to the physician assistant title that may artificially elevate the PA’s level of training and expertise in the eyes of the average patient.

OSMA is thankful to members of the committee for your attention to our comments and concerns on this legislation, and appreciates the opportunity to be a meaningful contributor to the legislative process. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.