Opponent Testimony HB 353

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Good morning Chair Schmidt and members of the Health Committee. My name is Peter Moore, and I am a second-year medical student and member of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio. I am here today to respectfully urge you to vote no on House Bill 353.

I want to be clear from the outset: I have respect for physician assistants and the vital role they play in our healthcare system. This testimony is not about diminishing their contributions. Rather, it is about preserving clarity and transparency for patients through accurate professional titles.

As a medical student, I can speak to what I know best, the rigorous training pathway to becoming a physician. For the past year and a half, I have studied 50 to 60 hours per week, every single week. My days begin at 5 a.m. with two hours of flashcards before four hours of class. I listen to lectures while running on the treadmill, watch more lectures and complete hours of practice questions each afternoon and evening. I even listen to medical content while driving in the car, conducting research experiments, or simply cleaning around the house. My brain never stops thinking about medicine.

I am learning every inheritance pattern for major pathological diseases, every intermediate in complex biochemical pathways, every contraindication and pharmacologic treatment option. I am drilling into my head the intricate details of human physiology and pathology across every organ system. This is my reality now, and it will `continue through two more years of medical school, followed by a minimum of three years of residency training, depending on my specialty. And even then, the learning never stops. Medicine is a lifelong commitment to staying current and expanding knowledge. This depth and duration of training is what the title 'physician' represents, and what patients expect when they see that title.

Physician assistants follow a different, valuable educational pathway, typically two to three years of PA school. Both pathways produce competent healthcare providers, but they are distinct, and our titles should reflect that distinction.

The word "associate" carries specific meaning in professional contexts. In law firms, associates are lawyers. In accounting firms, associates are accountants. In academia, associate professors are professors. The term implies a peer relationship, professionals working at similar levels of training and authority.

However, under Ohio Revised Code Section 4730.22, physician assistants practice under the supervision of physicians, and the supervising physician assumes legal responsibility and liability for the PA's services. If I am ultimately responsible for another provider's clinical decisions, we are not associates in the traditional sense of that word. We are collaborators in a structured, supervisory relationship, and our titles should reflect that reality.

My greatest concern is patient clarity and informed consent. Patients have the right to know who is caring for them and what training that person has completed. The practice of medicine is built on trust, and that trust depends on transparency. Patients don't care how much we know until they know how much we care, and part of caring is being honest about our credentials and the nature of our relationships with other providers.

If a patient sees someone introduced as a "physician associate," they may reasonably assume that person has completed medical school and residency training. This is not a theoretical concern, it is a predictable consequence of adopting terminology that blurs important distinctions. When complications arise or questions about care emerge, patients deserve to understand exactly who made which decisions and who bears ultimate responsibility.

I urge this committee to vote no on House Bill 353. Let us preserve professional titles that clearly communicate training, credentials, and the structure of healthcare teams. Clarity serves patients. Transparency builds trust. And accurate titles honor the distinct contributions of all healthcare professionals.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I am happy to answer any questions.