Opponent Testimony HB 535
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The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio
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Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide opposition testimony to House Bill 353.

My name is Pete Jordanides, and I am a current third-year medical student, and a member of The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio.

As a medical student currently on my clinical rotations, I feel fortunate to have interactions with patients and their healthcare teams, daily, in hospitals across Northeast Ohio. While on my clinical rotations, I have had the opportunity to work with many different professions in the healthcare space, including physician assistants (PA).

The healthcare team is a very broad and diverse group, composed of physicians, residents, nurses, PAs, social workers, and many others to help provide the best care possible for our patients. These teams embody true collaboration, with each member bringing unique and specialized strengths for the wellbeing of the patients we care for. Early in my medical training, I learned that patients ultimately do best when cared for by a well functioning and collaborative healthcare team.

On a healthcare team, each role is carved out and defined, so that everyone knows who is in charge of which aspect of the patient's care. This also helps the patient understand who is the one ultimately making the clinical decisions on their health. It is the physician's role to make these decisions, and it is important that patients understand that this responsibility rests with the physician, rather than other members of the care team.

The word “associate”, whether in medicine, law, academia, business, or any other field, carries an implied understanding that they are superior to an “assistant” role, with a way to develop into a permanent role in their respective field. An “associate” professor has more teaching experience, tenure, and independence in crafting their curriculum than an “assistant” professor. A legal “associate” is a qualified lawyer who can perform legal tasks and one day become a partner in a firm, while a legal “assistant” is a non-lawyer support staff member. Why should this universal terminology change so suddenly in the medical field and incite confusion for patients? The “physician assistant” name provides a clear understanding of their role in the healthcare field as a supportive one, as it has for many years. The term “associate” is confusing, as it may lead patients to assume their provider is a physician, when in fact they are not.

I have worked with many PAs in my young career, and everyone has shown me the utmost respect and kindness. I have many friends who are currently in PA schools across Ohio, and I know that we all share a common goal to help improve the lives of the patients we care for. Speaking to a friend of mine currently in PA school, she relayed to me that she is unsure why there is such a large fight for a name change, as she believes that the current name of “physician assistant” adequately highlights their role in the healthcare space. I know that many PAs want to care for patients and have a lasting impact to help better their lives, as do I, and all of my fellow medical students. This name change will only incite further confusion for our patients, and ultimately detracts from our collective goals.

In the interest of clarity in the medical setting, and to help provide a mutual understanding of providers’ roles on the healthcare team for our patients, I ask that you vote no on House Bill 353.