



Ohio Association of Physician Assistants Proponent Testimony
S.B. 259—PAs
Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee
Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony to you today regarding S.B. 259. My name is Josanne Pagel and I am providing this testimony on behalf of the Ohio Association of Physician Assistants (“OAPA”). I serve as OAPA’s Government Affairs Director. OAPA represents the physician assistant (“PA”) profession in Ohio. Serving over 3,000 licensed PAs and almost 1,000 PA students, OAPA seeks to promote quality, cost-effective, accessible health care, and to promote the professional and personal development of PAs with the organization.

I am also the Executive Director of PA Services at the Cleveland Clinic Health System and a clinical associate professor at the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine.

In my role as Executive Director, I oversee the largest population of physician assistants (“PAs”) in Ohio. I witness, first hand, the impact laws and regulations have on PAs. It is important that Ohio’s laws support patient access to high-quality healthcare and allow PAs to practice at the height of their training and experience. Some of our state’s laws greatly inhibit these goals, preventing PAs from providing care for patients at the highest possible level. PAs diagnose illness; develop and manage treatment plans; prescribe medications; and often, serve as a patient’s principal healthcare provider.

PAs are passionate about providing the highest quality of healthcare to patients, but overly burdensome laws, regulations, and administrative paperwork can deter the profession from moving forward and keeping up with the rapidly changing healthcare industry.

OAPA supports S.B. 259 because it will streamline administrative procedures for PAs in Ohio, make technical corrections, and provide statutory relief to ensure that PAs are able to act to the fullest extent of their licensure and training. Most importantly, S.B. 259 maintains the safeguards under current law to ensure quality patient care and continues to support the relationship between PAs and their supervising physicians.

S.B. 259 allows PAs to practice at the full scope of their training and experience by removing codified barriers. Notably, the bill makes three key improvements:

- Increases the ratio of PAs supervised by a physician at any one time from three to five;
- Streamlines the process for PAs who move to Ohio from another state and wish to continue practicing in Ohio; and

- Eliminates an antiquated formulary in Ohio law to allow PAs and physicians to collaborate on the best treatment and medication prescribed for patients, including permitting PAs to perform rapid intubation and procedural sedation in a health care facility.

PAs are currently permitted and privileged to perform intubation. To be able to do so, in life threatening situations, they must be able to order and perform procedural sedation. In fact, procedural sedation is a critical component to modern healthcare in a hospital setting and it will benefit overall patient care to allow PAs to perform this procedure. To do so, PAs must be credentialed and privileged according to Joint Commission standards and according to hospital policy. Those standards call for *proctored* training within the facility before a PA may be allowed to order or perform the procedure.

By limiting the setting in which a PA may perform procedural sedation exclusively within a hospital setting, this bill provides the necessary safeguards, without sacrificing patient access to timely, critical healthcare. This language is necessary because there is a demonstrable need in healthcare facilities to have PAs who can perform procedural sedation and rapid intubation when a doctor or nurse practitioner is not available.

Finally, we know the State Medical Board is proposing a possible amendment to allow supervision agreements to be stored on-site with a supervising physician and not require filing with the board. We support this move to reduce paperwork and unnecessary work on the part of the Board and would welcome the amendment.

Ohio is home to some of the best PAs in the country. While the PA profession is not easy, it is extremely rewarding. PAs want to provide the best possible health care to Ohioans. However, the current regulatory scheme surrounding the PA profession can be greatly improved. S.B. 259 will allow PAs to practice at the full capacity of their training and experience, while cutting through unnecessary red tape.

There are more than 3,000 PAs in Ohio that are a critical part of the healthcare workforce in our state. S.B. 259 will help improve the quality of care for patients in Ohio by allowing PAs, physicians, and other healthcare providers to decide what is best for their patients.

Thank you so much for allowing me to testify before you today in support of S.B. 259. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee might have.