

Chairman Lipps and esteemed House Health Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing us to discuss our bill, House Bill 318, regarding Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants. My name is Nate Flath. I have been a licensed practicing anesthesiologist assistant for 10 years, 9 of those being in my home state of Ohio. Currently I am the Program Director for one of the two anesthesiologist assistant training programs in this state. I am here today as the president of the Ohio Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants asking for your support of House Bill 318. I appreciate each of your diligent work with the passing of the core of this bill as an amendment in the last session, which unfortunately did not pass before the end of lame duck.

In the October House Health Committee meeting Representative Liston asked a great question about the education and training of CAAs. I'd like to provide a little more follow-up clarity to this question. The simple analogy is Physician Assistants are to Nurse Practitioners as CAAs are to CRNAs. Both CAA and CRNA programs are 2-3 years of post-undergraduate education. Future CAAs enter into their Masters level program with a pre-medical undergraduate core. The prerequisite requirement for CAA programs is almost identical to medical school pre-requisite coursework, with schools requiring either the MCAT or GRE. The programs then use a combination of a rigorous didactic curriculum, high-fidelity simulation and hands-on clinical experience to train students to become safe, patient-centered anesthetists as members of the anesthesia care team. AA students finish their 24 – 28 month programs with a minimum of 2000 clinical hours, with many students having over 3000 hours of direct anesthetic patient care.

CAAs have been practicing in Ohio since their inception in 1969. We have fought to ensure availability of safe, anesthesiologist led anesthetic care for patients across this great state. In many institutions across this state and the country, CAAs work side by side and interchangeably with our CRNA colleagues as members of the anesthesia care team. House Bill 318 will allow CAAs to practice to an extent more consistent with their training and education. Additionally, HB 318 will provide scope of practice parity between CAAs and CRNAs and remedy the disparity created with the passing HB 197. HB 197 provided some additional scope of practice for CRNAs regarding postoperative orders for respiratory therapists among a few other physician extension duties beneficial for patient care. This has created difficulty in hospitals utilizing CAAs and CRNAs analogously as they have providers they use equivocally but with different legislative scopes of practice. With the passage of HB 318, hospitals wishing to allow anesthetists to practice to the extent of their education, such as writing postoperative orders, can consider both CAAs and CRNAs.

An important aspect of this bill is that it maintains physician anesthesiologist supervision of CAAs. This bill also ensures that patients can get the care they need while not having to wait for the anesthesiologist who might be busy caring for another patient. This is the purpose of the anesthesia care team. Anesthesiologists and anesthetists communicate to design an anesthetic care plan for each patient. If I have planned with my supervising anesthesiologist appropriate care for this patient post procedurally, why am I not permitted to pass this information along to other providers such as a respiratory therapist in the recovery room? Especially considering I was able to give these medications 5 minutes earlier in the operating room for this patient. My options currently are to go back to my operating room and draw the medication up personally to then come back to the recovery room and give to the patient or wait for the attending anesthesiologist to come to PACU. Both options cause delays in treatment for my patient in the recovery room. HB 318 ensures patients do not need to wait for appropriate care.

I would be happy to provide further clarity or answer any questions anyone might have. Thank you for your commitment to improving the healthcare for our patients across the buckeye state.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Flath, CAA

Ohio Academy of Anesthesiologist Assistants, President