

Kansas Academy of Physician Assistants

Remarks in Support of Senate Bill No. 285 Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare March 17, 2015

Dear Chairwoman Pilcher-Cook and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

My name is Doug Smith and I serve as Executive Director of the Kansas Academy of Physician Assistants (KAPA). Thank you for allowing the Kansas Academy of Physician Assistants to testify on this matter, which is of great importance to our members.

KAPA serves as the official representative voice for the Physician Assistants (PAs) in Kansas. Our purpose is to enhance the quality of medical care of the citizens of Kansas by providing medical education to physician assistants, other health professionals, the legislative and governing bodies and to the public.

The Kansas Academy of Physician Assistants appears today in support of Senate Bill No. 285 which amends the Healing Arts Act and Physician Assistant Licensure Act.

My comments today will address specific sections of the legislation that relate directly to physician assistants. The first two sections clean up action taken in the 2014 session to amend the Physician Assistant Licensure Act.

First in Section 9, starting on page 25 you will see a number of technical adjustments to the existing statute. In section 9(f)(1) through 9(f)(3) [lines 25-43 on page 26 and lines 1-10 on page 27] is new language creating a “federally active license” for physician assistants. The federal active license was deleted last year because physician assistants practicing in federal facilities are exempt from being licensed and regulated by a state. Since adoption of the bill last year we have learned that employers at some federal facilities require their physician assistant employees to maintain a “current” license in the state which they are employed. We are reinserting the federal active license to accommodate that federal employment requirement.

Second, in 2014, physician assistants were included in the Health Care Stabilization Fund’s excess medical liability insurance coverage requirements of K.S.A. 40-3402. The Health Care Stabilization Fund language contains an exemption for physician assistants providing charitable health care in a clinic with protection under the federal or state tort claims act. The new language on page 27 in Section 9(g)(1) through 9(g)(4) [lines 11-43 on page 27 and lines 1-3 on page 28] creates a new exempt license category for physician assistants and excludes them from the requirement of the Health Care Stabilization Fund for gratuitous medical services not covered by the tort claim acts. There is a similar exemption for physicians in the Healing Arts Act.

Third, Section 14 starting on page 36, line 18 amends K.S.A. 65-4941 and authorizes a physician assistant to sign Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders for patients at medical care facilities and adult care homes. These orders are normally included in hospitalization/admission instructions and can be unintentionally over-looked and delayed if a physician assistant is precluded from signing the order at the time of admittance. A supervising physician always has the option of not permitting a physician assistant to write such an order, if they choose to under their written supervision agreement. In Section 16, we are amending K.S.A.65-4942, which is the statutorily prescribed form to be used in pre-hospitalization Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) requests, and authorizes a physician assistant to affirm a patient's request.

Finally, we also support the proposal offered by the Kansas Board of Healing Arts throughout the bill to extend the effective date of last year's legislative changes contained in House Bill No. 2673 until January, 2016. We are still working our way through the rule and regulation implementation process and need extra time to get the necessary regulations developed.

We ask for your support of Senate Bill No. 285.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely

Doug Smith
Executive Director