



SOUTH CAROLINA SOCIETY OF ANESTHESIOLOGISTS

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July 17, 2019

The Honorable James H. "Jay" Lucas
Speaker of the House
1744 Garland Drive
Hartsville, SC 29550

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I am writing on behalf of the South Carolina Society of Anesthesiologists ("SCSA") to express our opposition to S. 563, a bill pending in the Senate Medical Affairs Committee. SCSA represents Anesthesiologists practicing throughout our State.

S. 563 would amend both the Nurse Practice Act and the Medical Practice Act to eliminate any reference to physician supervision of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists ("CRNAs"). Currently, CRNAs practice under the supervision of a physician at all times. In hospitals and many other settings, the supervising physician is an Anesthesiologist. In other settings, such as facilities performing certain outpatient procedures, the supervising physician is the physician performing the procedure. We are not aware of any circumstances in which a patient has not had access to a particular surgery or procedure due to the lack to a physician supervisor since physicians must be involved in all instances.

Anesthesiologists value the services that CRNAs provide and believe that they are an important part of the physician-led team to ensure that patients receive the safest anesthesia care possible. CRNAs are well-trained to administer an anesthetic and to monitor the patient. The role of the physician, however, goes well beyond that. Physicians conduct the initial patient evaluation, prescribe the anesthesia drugs to be utilized, and direct patient care before, during, and after the surgery or procedure. Physicians have the education, training, and knowledge of medicine to differentially diagnose and treat problems that may arise before, during, and after anesthesia is administered. The difference in these two disciplines is critical to patient safety.

Anesthesiologists are especially well-trained to provide anesthesia and related care and thus to supervise CRNAs. Anesthesiologists must complete four years of medical school followed by an anesthesia residency which is a minimum of four years. Further specialization requires an additional one to three years of fellowship training. The curriculum for CRNAs cannot, and does not, approach that level of education and training.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns with, and opposition to, legislation aimed at authorizing independent practice by CRNAs. Physician supervision is, in our experience, critical to patient safety and quality of care.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 864-477-0498 or our Executive Director, Margarita Pate, at 843-697-3114. We will be providing more detailed information to you as the need arises.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin B. Walker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kevin B. Walker, M.D.
President