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November 11, 2019

The Honorable Daniel B. Verdin, III
Chairman, Senate Medical Affairs Committee
412 Gressette Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Senator Verdin:

As the association for physicians of all specialties in South Carolina, the SCMA provides a voice for the medical profession and works to improve the health of all South Carolinians. Our key mission is to promote the highest quality of medical care on the behalf of our patients.

The SCMA strongly opposes S.563 which would remove physician supervision of nurse anesthetists. There is no public need to remove physician supervision, and in fact the public would be harmed by removing the physician from this critical role.

As an organization and as physicians, we are committed and united on patient safety. A critical component of patient safety is how physicians, nurses, technicians and other support staff work as a team, with the physician as the leader of the team. One of the best examples of a well-tuned team is the anesthesia care team. Anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists have been working together in this care team model for many years. All South Carolina hospitals, surgery centers and office-based facilities work in a care team model. Most of the time, the anesthesiologists are the physician team leaders entrusted with the medical direction and oversight of the nurse anesthetists. If a patient's anesthesia care is not being medically directed by an anesthesiologist, then the physician performing the surgery or procedure is the physician supervisor of the nurse anesthetist.

Anesthesiology is the practice of medicine and is a critical care specialty. The work that our physician colleagues are performing or directing is highly complicated and serious. When seconds count, you want the physician expert in resuscitation, airway management, etc., to be there. This is not an area of medicine that can be handed over to nurses lacking the training and clinical experience of a physician. Anesthesiologists are among the most prolific physician groups in terms of patient safety research and advances. They are also the only physician group to have achieved Six Sigma.

The anesthesiologists and patients of South Carolina have our complete support. Please join us in opposing S.563.

Respectfully,

Todd E. Schlesinger, M.D.
President, SCMA

cc: Members of the Senate Medical Affairs Committee