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I would like to share my support of the current 407 application for Anesthesia Assistant licensure in the state of Nebraska. I currently serve as the Nebraska Hospital Association Chairman, and I'm the CEO of Great Plains Health located in North Platte, Nebraska.

The labor shortage in healthcare is the greatest challenge our national health system is facing. We are not struggling with open hospital beds, or available surgical suites, we are struggling to provide access because of the lack of qualified labor that is available in our state and the nation.

The professional organization representing the CRNA's have not provided any solutions for the staffing crisis our hospitals and health systems are experiencing. As I have reached out to CRNA programs in the past, I do not get the feedback that they want to expand their programs. We have fifteen anesthesia providers in our organization between our hospital and Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) and have never had more than one student at a time even after we have reached out to programs requesting more rotations at our facility. There are many studies that document the anesthesia provider shortage, the RAND Corporation, the American Association of Medical Colleges, and Modern Healthcare share that the current shortage of providers is 12,500 increasing to 20,000 over the next ten years.

One solution would be to focus on increasing CRNA program enrollment across the country. The challenge with increasing the CRNA program is that you have to be a Registered Nurse (RN) to become a CRNA. The RN shortage has reached epidemic levels, so if you meet the anesthesia need through training more nurses to provide anesthesia the nursing shortage increases. Every year since 2010 our nation turns away approx. 60,000 nursing school applicants. Increased roadblocks through professional organizations, licensing and accreditation for educational institutions, and the lack to adapt training to how we currently practice medicine are hindering nursing enrollment. Our country currently recognizes Physician Assistants (PA's) as well as Nurse Practitioners. Both have been successful in our healthcare environment. A pre-med student, or an excellent Respiratory Therapists or some other health professional would be a great candidate to become an Anesthesia provider.

Nebraska is a rural state that struggles with workforce. We should be on the cutting edge of scope expansion to meet the needs of our residents. Allowing Certified Anesthesia Assistant's (CAA's) to practice in our state makes common sense. There are currently 20 jurisdictions that allow CAA's to practice. These include Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Utah, Missouri, Texas, Florida, and many others. Many of these states do not have the same labor shortage the state of Nebraska has. The evidence shows that CAA's provide safe, high quality anesthesia. It is disappointing that we are so far behind these other states on expanding access to care for our residents. The labor shortage is a crisis in our county and every solution to help with this shortage should be explored. This will not fix the labor shortage but it is one of the many steps that need to be taken for us to provide the care that our residents in Nebraska deserve.

Ivan Mitchell

CEO Great Plains Health