

August 25, 2022

Attn: Technical Review Committee, Board of Health, and Dr. Anthonie

As physicians and surgeons licensed in Nebraska, we share your commitment to building and maintaining a quality health system in Nebraska. We are writing to express concern regarding the proposed licensure of anesthesiologist assistants (AAs) in Nebraska. **We urge you to recommend against the licensure of AAs.**

Nebraska already licenses two types of anesthesia professionals—Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) and physician anesthesiologists. Currently, CRNAs practicing in Nebraska safely deliver the vast majority of anesthesia for surgical, obstetrical, and emergency procedures to citizens across the state. CRNAs are especially important for ensuring patient access to care in rural and other medically underserved areas, enabling patients to receive safe, cost-effective healthcare services close to their homes rather than having to travel great distances for needed care.

AAs are not a desirable option for patients or for our Nebraska healthcare system. AAs must work under direct supervision, and that supervision may only come from a physician anesthesiologist. Therefore, AAs cannot work anywhere where there are no physician anesthesiologists present. In a predominantly rural state like Nebraska, that makes AAs a non-factor for alleviating patient access to care issues or for controlling healthcare costs.

Further, no peer-reviewed studies in scientific journals have been published regarding the quality of care or quality of outcomes involving AAs. The quality of care that AAs provide is unproven. If an AA's supervising anesthesiologist is not available for any reason (working off site, day off, etc.), the AA cannot provide anesthesia care. If emergencies occur simultaneously in different operating rooms, lapses in supervision would likely occur and anesthesia care could be impacted. There is nothing to demonstrate this would be safe or in the best interests of patients.

CRNAs are independently licensed professionals who provide a solution to access and cost-containment issues and have a proven track record of quality care and patient safety. CRNAs are essential to meeting the anesthesia needs of our healthcare system. However, if Anesthesiologist Assistants would be licensed in Nebraska, the number of CRNAs in our state would likely be reduced. While CRNA schools in our region currently are reporting increased class sizes, Nebraska programs project a *decrease* in CRNA graduation rates of greater than 40% if AAs are allowed to practice in the state.

In summary, we believe licensure of AAs would be bad for Nebraska because

- They do NOT improve patient safety;
- They do NOT reduce costs;
- They do NOT improve patient access to anesthesia services.

We urge you to recommend AGAINST licensure of Anesthesiologist Assistants.

Sincerely,

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