

WAFP Submits Testimony Opposing Bill – Permitting Physician Assistant Independent Practice

On November 5, the Senate Health Committee held a hearing on Senate Bill 435, a bill that would allow physician assistants to practice more independently and to change their job title to “physician associate.” WAFP opposes this legislation as it poses safety concerns for Wisconsin's patients and erodes our state’s physician-led team-based health care system.

Under current law, physician assistants (PAs) are required to either work under the direction and management of a physician or under a written collaborative agreement with a physician. This bill repeals those requirements. Due to the very significant difference in the amount of education, training, and clinical experience between physicians and PAs, WAFP feels it is critically important that PAs continue to either work under the direction and management of a physician or under a written collaborative agreement with a physician. Current law allows physician assistants to practice to the fullest extent of their scope while still under the oversight of a licensed physician.

With respect to changing the title “physician assistant” to “physician associate,” WAFP is concerned this will likely cause confusion among patients, as the physician assistant title has been in use for several decades. Ultimately, it will likely blur the line between a physician who has received extensive education and training and a PA whose education and training are significantly less extensive. Patients deserve to have clarity as to the qualifications of the health care clinicians providing care to them.

Following this hearing, the Senate Health Committee quickly announced that it would hold a meeting to vote on Senate Bill 435. In response, WAFP’s Madison lobbyists met with committee members and sent a memo underscoring our concerns about this bill and requesting they vote no on this bill. However, on November 11, the committee voted on a party-line basis (3-2) to advance this legislation to the full Senate for potential further consideration.

WAFP will continue to aggressively advocate against this legislation. It is also worth noting that Governor Evers’ office has already signaled his concerns with this legislation. Further updates will be included in future editions of *Inside the Capitol*.