

February 25, 2015

The Honorable Mitch Greenlick, Chair of the House Health Care Committee

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee,

I write you today as an Anesthesiologist who has practiced in Oregon 24 years. We need anesthesiologist assistants (AAs) in Oregon now. Please support HB 2295, the bill that would allow anesthesiologist assistants (AAs) to practice.

An AA is a highly educated and highly skilled health care professional who is part of the health care team model used to deliver anesthesia. Under the supervision of an anesthesiologist an AA is defined, just like a CRNA, as a “non-physician anesthetist” within the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) section of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Currently, CRNAs have a monopoly in the industry. Our free market should not stand for that. There is no reason that a qualified health care professional should not be allowed to look for a job in Oregon. AAs are not looking to take the jobs of CRNAs, instead they are looking to add diversity to our workforce—giving employers additional options when hiring care team extenders.

AAs are allowed to practice in 17 states and Washington, D.C. With the exponential rise of newly insured Oregonians, more qualified health care practitioners will be needed to meet the demands of the system. Oregon is currently at a competitive disadvantage by arbitrarily limiting our workforce options.

AAs are trained medically with specific emphasis on the delivery of anesthesia, whereas CRNAs are recruited from other subfields of nursing. AAs come from a completely separate applicant pool, much like medical students.

There is no downside to allowing a fully qualified and credentialed health care professional to legally apply for a job in Oregon. Thank you for your time and I urge you to vote “yes” on House Bill 2295.

Mark Norling

President, Oregon Society of Anesthesiologists