



February 4, 2016

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4108 - Anesthesiologist Assistants

Colleagues,

House Bill 4108 would allow anesthesiologist assistants (AAs) to practice in the State of Oregon. I became interested in the topic after meeting some anesthesiologists and learning their interest in allowing AAs to practice in Oregon - I was frankly surprised at the level of support coming from these physicians on the topic. I asked my wife, who is a Pediatric ICU nurse at OHSU, about her interactions with anesthesia care.

I did some research on my own. I learned that the job description for the Anesthesiologist Assistant (AA) profession is similar to that for a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA), and when employed within the same organizations as CRNAs, the job description can be identical. One fundamental difference is that AAs must work under the medical supervision of a licensed anesthesiologist. Conversely, in some unique clinical settings a CRNA can practice under the medical supervision of any physician (not necessarily an anesthesiologist).

And then we get into the familiar arguments about cost, independence, and control.

After researching the issue, it seems to me that both CRNAs and AAs have a place in Oregon. In fact, in Portland, an AA can practice at the VA hospital, but cannot practice in the adjacent buildings of OHSU, where my wife works. AAs practicing in a team clinical setting developing and implementing an anesthesia care plan can provide patient-centered, quality, and cost-effective care. It is a team approach to anesthesia management in which an anesthesiologist concurrently supervises anesthetists during the performance of an anesthetic procedure.

Some other thoughts:

- AAs are fully credentialed, as they receive 6-7 years of schooling and are licensed by a medical board before being allowed to enter an operating room.
- 17 states (and DC) and some VA hospitals allow AAs to practice.

Please join me in supporting House Bill 4108.

Sincerely,

John Davis
State Representative
House District 26

