

WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: (---)
(---)

Subject: Physician Assistant Title Change

Introduced by: Susan J. Baumgaertel, MD FACP, Delegate

Referred to:

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2 WHEREAS, the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) has passed a resolution to change their
3 title from 'Physician Assistant' (PA) to 'Physician Associate'¹; and
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5 WHEREAS, the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) has previously passed resolutions
6 pertaining to the nature of a PA in the healthcare setting, including a 2017 action² which
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- 8 1. Called to eliminate the legal requirement for a specific relationship between a PA, physician, or
9 any other healthcare provider, and
10 2. Called to create a separate majority PA board to regulate PAs and add PAs and physicians who
11 work with PAs to medical or healing arts boards.
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13 These actions both sought to change the interactions between a physician and physician assistant, in
14 hopes to give more autonomy and power to the PA; and
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16 WHEREAS, the current definition of a Physician Assistant³ states that:

17 A physician assistant (PA) is a medical professional who practices under the direction of a
18 licensed physician.
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21 Highlighting that a PA's role specifically acts under the direction of a physician; and
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23 WHEREAS, reputable organizations such as the American Medical Association (AMA) have created
24 statements that directly oppose this AAPA proposed title change, citing issues relating to patient
25 transparency and the understanding of the type of care they are receiving; and
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¹ <https://www.bartonassociates.com/blog/aapa-votes-to-change-title-physician-assistant-to-physician-associate#:~:text=This%20past%20Tuesday%2C%20by%20a%20majority%20vote%20of,providers%20from%20physician%20assistant%20to%20%E2%80%9C%20physician%20associate.%E2%80%9D>

² [Optimal Team Practice: Learn More About OTP - AAPA](#)

³ [Physician Assistants: What Are They? \(thebalancecareers.com\)](#)

27 WHEREAS, the American Medical Association (AMA) has previously campaigned against other title
28 changes through the #Stopthecreep ⁴advocacy campaign which attempted to spread awareness about
29 the inappropriate expansion of non-physicians into physicians’ scope of practice. This campaign was
30 paired with legislative advocacy that resulted in⁵:

- 31
- 32 • A letter from the AMA presented to South Dakota House of Representatives where the AMA
- 33 strongly opposed a House Bill (HB 1163) which would have allowed physician assistants to
- 34 practice without physician involvement,
- 35 • A letter from the AMA to Maryland legislators that strongly opposed a Maryland House and
- 36 Senate (HB 182 and SB 169) which would have allowed podiatrists to use the term “podiatric
- 37 physician.”
- 38 • A comment letter to Georgia Governor Kemp where the AMA encouraged the governor to veto
- 39 a Georgia Senate Bill (SB 321) that would allow APRNs to order diagnostic imaging studies, a task
- 40 that traditionally has been at the discretion of a physician.

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42 These actions highlight the AMA’s urgency in combating infringement on the scope of practice; and

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44 WHEREAS, other medical organizations, including The American Academy of Dermatology Association
45 (AADA), The American College of Radiology (ACR), and The American Osteopathic Association (AOA),
46 have all come out with statements that strongly oppose the title change of Physician Assistant to
47 Physician Associate. In these statements they highlight concerns relating to:

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- 49 • The shift from physician-led to ‘physician-optional’ practice in healthcare,
- 50 • A lack of transparency in what type of care the patient is receiving,
- 51 • Muddling of roles and responsibilities between non-physicians and physicians.

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53 WHEREAS, a joint statement by several medical organizations⁶, including:

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- 55 • American Academy of emergency Medicine (AAEM)
- 56 • AAEM Resident and Student Association (AAEM/RSA)
- 57 • American College of Osteopathic emergency Physicians (ACOEP)
- 58 • ACOEP-Resident Student Organization (ACOEP-RSO)
- 59 • American college of emergency Physicians (ACEP)
- 60 • Council of Residency Directors in emergency Medicine (CORD)
- 61 • Emergency Medicine Residents’ Association (EMRA)
- 62 • Society of Academic emergency Medicine (SAEM)
- 63 • SAEM-Residents and Medical Students (SAEM-RAMS)

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65 Uniformly concluded that medical care in the United States should be ‘physician-led’ and highlighted the
66 importance of preserving the scope of physician work. These groups state that physicians should
67 continue to play a lead role in shaping standards for medical education;

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⁴ <https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/scope-practice/ama-successfully-fights-scope-practice-expansions-threaten>

⁵ <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/ama-statements/statement-aapa-change-physician-assistant-title>

⁶ <https://www.aaem.org/UserFiles/file/AllEMorgjointstatementrepostgradtrainingofNPandPAs.pdf>

69 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that WSMA supports the American Medical Association's decision to
70 oppose the title change of Physician Assistant to Physician Associate, a stance that has been echoed by
71 many other accredited medical organizations.