



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
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February 8, 2022

Senator Wayne Steinhauer
Chair, Senate Health and Human Services Committee
South Dakota Senate
500 E Capitol Ave., Room 412
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

RE: Support for S.B. 134, Revising Provisions Related to Physician Assistants

Dear Chairman Steinhauer and Committee Members:

On behalf of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA), the national organization representing all 282 accredited PA programs in the United States, we are writing in strong support of S.B. 134 and to clarify the Association's position on Optimal Team Practice for practicing PAs in response to recent mischaracterizations by the South Dakota State Medical Association (SDSMA). As your committee considers S.B. 134, a bill which would meaningfully expand access to high-quality care for patients through the elimination of outdated administrative barriers restricting PA practice, it is critical that the perspectives of all stakeholders be accurately reflected.

In a recent communication to their membership concerning S.B. 134, the SDSMA asserted, "Even the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) - the very organization that represents physician assistant educational programs in the U.S. - has criticized the national effort to remove PA requirements for supervision and collaboration."¹ As the Association stated in a previous letter to the South Dakota House Health and Human Services Committee

¹ South Dakota State Medical Association. (2022). *Action Alerts*. <https://www.sdsma.org/actionalerts>.

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sent on February 26, 2021, as well as in prior communications with SDSMA leadership, this assertion is deceptive and not reflective of PAEA's position on the OTP policy passed by the American Academy of PAs (AAPA) House of Delegates in 2017. Concerns previously raised by the Association, which were elaborated upon in the subsequently issued Core Competencies for New Physician Assistant Graduates, focused specifically on the needs of new graduates entering clinical practice - not those of experienced PAs that, as expected, improve their skills and autonomy over time. The language of the adopted OTP policy pertaining to collaboration with other members of the health care team addressed these concerns focused specifically on new graduates, leading to PAEA's strong support.

Throughout the history of the profession, collaboration with other members of the health care team has been a cornerstone of both PA education and practice and a critical component of ensuring high-quality care for patients. For this reason, as a component of the broader policy, OTP includes a commitment to collaboration **determined at the practice level** based upon the experiences, skills, and capabilities of specific PAs. Based upon both the unnecessary administrative barriers created when collaboration with a specific physician is mandated by state law and the continued commitment to the value of team-based care stated specifically in the policy, PAEA was proud to endorse the final iteration of OTP passed by the AAPA House of Delegates in 2017.

S.B. 134 reflects the aims of the OTP policy adopted by AAPA by eliminating the requirement for a practice agreement with a specific supervising physician after the completion of 1,040 practice hours. This change will allow PAs to be more easily employed at health care facilities throughout the state, eliminate the possibility of patients losing access to care provided by PAs in the event of the unexpected departure of a supervising physician, and ultimately ensure better outcomes while PAs continue to collaborate with other members of the health care team. For these reasons, PAEA supports S.B. 134 and urges the committee to advance this critical legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the Association's position on S.B. 134. Should you have specific questions or if you would like additional information, please contact Senior Director of Government Relations Tyler Smith at 703-667-4356 or tsmith@PAAonline.org.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kara Caruthers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kara" and last name "Caruthers" clearly legible.

Kara Caruthers, MSPAS, PA-C
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara P. Fletcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sara" and last name "Fletcher" clearly legible.

Sara Fletcher, PhD
Interim Chief Executive Officer