



**HB 59 Interested Party Testimony
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Past President and Government Affairs Chair
Ohio Association of Physician Assistants (OAPA)
House General Government Committee
Chair Sharon Ray
November 13, 2025**

Chair Ray, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as an interested party to HB 59, occupational licensure review legislation introduced by Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur and Representative Mark Hiner. My name is Matthew Freado, and I am a Past President and Government Affairs Chair of the Ohio Association of Physician Assistants.

I am testifying today in support of a simple yet important update to change the professional title of Physician Assistant to Physician Associate in Ohio law, which we urge you to support as an amendment to HB 59. To be very clear, our title change proposal does not change the scope of practice for PAs. It does not expand any authority, alter supervision requirements, or change physician oversight. Instead, it modernizes an outdated title to better reflect how the modern PA profession is educated, trained, and already functioning in practice across Ohio.

Although this proposal is simple, it has generated a variety of concerns, such as the proposed title of Physician Associate challenges physician authority or even confuses patients. I'd like to take this opportunity to address these issues.

1. The term “associate” more accurately represents the modern PA profession.

PAs complete master's-level medical training, including over 2,000 hours of supervised clinical rotations across multiple specialties. A single national accrediting body accredits all PA programs, while a single national credentialing body certifies PAs initially and throughout their careers. As PAs, we evaluate, diagnose, treat, prescribe medication, including controlled substances, perform procedures, assist in surgery, and practice medicine in every care setting. The term “*assistant*” does not accurately reflect our professional reality and can even mislead patients and other providers into believing we are in temporary or trainee roles. An associate is a colleague or partner, typically indicating a professional who works alongside others as part of a team, which is what PAs do. “Physician Associate” better describes what PAs already are: nationally board-certified, licensed medical professionals who work as a part of coordinated medical teams.

2. The term “associate” provides clarity for patients and healthcare teams.

We have heard from some that this title change could cause confusion among patients. The truth is, the current title of “assistant” creates confusion, as the term *assistant* misrepresents the PA's role in patient care and perpetuates misconceptions that we merely perform menial, delegated tasks. A national survey by a market research firm found 71% of patients and more than 60% of physicians agreed that “Physician Associate” better reflects the role of modern-day PAs.

Additionally, Ohio law already protects against title confusion. Section 4730.02(G) of the Ohio Revised Code states: *“No person practicing as a physician assistant shall fail to wear at all times when on duty a placard, plate, or other device identifying that person as a ‘physician assistant.’*” Under our proposal, that same required placard would simply read “Physician Associate.” Patients will continue to clearly see our title on our name badge, just with wording that more precisely reflects our role as a highly trained, collaborative healthcare provider.

3. The title physician associate does not undermine physician authority.

Simply put, this bill and the title of the PA profession has no impact on the role or authority of our physician colleagues. PAs value our partnership with our physician colleagues, and this change reflects precisely how modern PAs function: collaboratively, dependably, and professionally within the healthcare team. This proposal simply updates the title of our own profession to better clarify the role of PAs. Modern medicine is built on teamwork, and clarity strengthens that teamwork. When every member of the team is understood, patients benefit.

Why Now?

The national professional organization for PAs, the American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA), formally adopted the “Physician Associate” title in 2021. States such as Oregon, Maine, and New Hampshire have already passed title change legislation, with no negative impact reported on billing, reimbursement, or operations.

This proposal aligns Ohio with national efforts. Ohio is home to approximately 6,700 PAs, representing a 36% increase in licensed PAs since 2021. The profession is projected to grow 20% nationally by 2034. With 17 accredited PA programs across Ohio, among the highest in the country, we are producing a workforce that is ready to meet Ohio’s growing healthcare needs. Adopting this title change will help retain and attract top talent, reduce patient confusion, and recognize the profession as the vital part of the healthcare team it has become.

Conclusion

Once again, Chair Ray and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on HB 59 occupational licensure review. This is an opportunity to ensure Ohio’s laws accurately reflect the role of PAs in modern medicine. On behalf of Ohio’s thousands of licensed PAs and the patients we serve, I urge your support for updating our professional title to Physician Associate. Thank you for your time and consideration. I’d be happy to answer any questions you may have.