



Pennsylvania Association of Nurse Anesthetists

DESIGNATION SIGN-ON LETTER: CRNA Programs in Pennsylvania

Re: CRNA Professional Designation Legislation: S.B. 325 (Gordner) and H.B. 1064 (Toohil)

Dear Senator/Representative:

Pennsylvania has more nurse anesthesia graduate programs than any other state, attracting students from across the country to study here to become certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs). Yet, our commonwealth remains one of just two states that fail to formally recognize CRNAs in statute or provide licensure, meaning these advanced practice specialty nurses are recognized only as registered nurses (RNs) in Pennsylvania.

To ensure our commonwealth maintains its leadership role in this important profession, and on behalf of nurse anesthetist programs across Pennsylvania, we join together to urge your support of professional designation measures that would formally recognize nurse anesthetists as “CRNAs” under Pennsylvania statute.

Because there is no definition for “certified registered nurse anesthetist” under the state’s Professional Nursing Law, CRNAs are recognized only as registered nurses, not as CRNAs --- despite the lengthy advanced training, three additional years of education, significant clinical experience and specialty skills these professionals must obtain to practice.

Two bills --- Senate Bill 325 introduced by Sen. John Gordner and House Bill 1064 introduced by Rep. Tarah Toohil --- would finally remedy this issue and formally recognize nurse anesthetists as “CRNAs” under Pennsylvania statute. We urge your support.

Nurse anesthetist programs like ours have seen firsthand the challenges our students and professionals face without title recognition in Pennsylvania.

Without formal designation, many of our students relocate to states where they can utilize the full scope of their education and training in clinical practices. Even then, without an official CRNA designation in Pennsylvania, many graduating students wait as long as six months to become credentialed in other states, because without a CRNA license here and an absence of license recognition or reciprocity, other state boards must verify that the graduates have met their state requirements to be licensed appropriately. Retention of these advanced professionals in Pennsylvania should be a priority for our commonwealth.

Nurse anesthetists must graduate with a minimum of a master's degree from a nurse anesthesia accredited program, complete greater than 2,000 hours of clinical experience in anesthesia practice and pass a national certification exam in order to be able to practice. When you combine the clinical ICU experience as an RN required to enter CRNA training; the clinical experience obtained in an undergraduate nursing curriculum; and the clinical anesthesia training in a nurse anesthesia program, the average nurse anesthetist completes 9,000 clinical hours. CRNAs are required to be nationally certified and must be recertified every four years, meeting strict continuing education standards.

There are challenges for professional CRNAs who practice in Pennsylvania, especially for those who are active military personnel or who put their life-saving skills to work in volunteer or other support capacities beyond their normal professional job.

For example, Pennsylvania CRNAs who are active military have to secure CRNA licensure in another state to serve as a CRNA in an active duty role of the armed forces. That brings logistical and financial challenges to meet licensure and continuing education requirements to stay licensed and credentialed for military service in another state. Nurse anesthetists have been the primary providers of anesthesia care to U.S. military personnel on the front lines since World War I, and remain the primary anesthesia providers in austere combat theaters. Yet, Pennsylvania's battle-tested CRNAs are at a distinct disadvantage without CRNA licensure here.

Moreover, Pennsylvania-based CRNAs cannot assist as part of emergency response teams in other states because they lack formal CRNA licensure in Pennsylvania, which diminishes the role our commonwealth can play in helping states affected by hurricanes, floods or other natural disasters.

For all they do, Pennsylvania's CRNAs deserve recognition in the commonwealth. Bipartisan measures similar to S.B. 325 and H.B. 1064 have been introduced and passed in previous legislative sessions. On behalf of the following nurse anesthesia programs in Pennsylvania, nurse anesthesia students and professional CRNAs, we urge you to support both of these bills. Thank you.

SINCERELY,

Allegheny School of Anesthesia
University of Scranton School of Nurse Anesthesia
Cedar Crest College Nurse Anesthesia Program
Crozer Chester Medical Center / Villanova University Nurse Anesthesia Program
Drexel University Nurse Anesthesia Program
Excela Health School Anesthesia
Frank J. Tornetta School of Anesthesia at Montgomery Hospital / La Salle University Nurse Anesthesia Program
Geisinger Health System / Bloomsburg University of Pa. Nurse Anesthesia Program
Thomas Jefferson University Jefferson School of Nursing Nurse Anesthesia Program
University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing Nurse Anesthesia Program
UPMC Hamot School of Anesthesia / Gannon University
York College of Pa. / WellSpan Health Nurse Anesthetist Program