

February 3, 2025

To the Members of the Senate and House of Representatives:

My name is Dr. Kathy Perryman. I am a resident of Leawood, KS. I am writing to you to support licensure of Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAAs) in Kansas. I represent myself, the Kansas Association of Anesthesiologist Assistants, and the Kansas Society of Anesthesiologists.

After Missouri approved licensure for Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAA), they joined the care team in our hospital over 15 years ago and have worked side-by-side and interchangeably with our nurse anesthetists in our Missouri site. They have been well-accepted by the entire surgical team and are indistinguishable from their nurse anesthetist colleagues in their jobs.

CAAs enter their profession by a pre-med educational track, rather than a nursing track, so their professional education is specialized after completing a scientific undergraduate background and comparable to the specialization for nurse anesthetists after nursing school. The KANA has emphasized that, in their opinion, a nursing background is essential before this advanced training. As a former CRNA and now board-certified physician anesthesiologist, I have a different perspective. I have many years of experience teaching AA and SRNA students and personally managing CAAs and CRNAs in the care team with supervision, so I have the personal knowledge to understand their knowledgebase and capabilities. The skillset learned during CAA training is comprehensive and provided to the committee in a separate document. I can attest from personal experience that CAAs have the knowledge base, manual skills, clinical judgement, and vigilance required to perform their jobs in the same capacity as nurse anesthetists. CAAs are firm believers in the anesthesia care team, physician led model and only practice with anesthesiologist supervision.

The KSA has filed multiple licensure bills over the past seven years and has followed all of the instructions given to us by both Senate and House committees. To recap: introducing licensure legislation; convening a KDHE Technical Review Committee as requested by KANA, which after multiple hearings resulted in approval for licensure by both the Committee and the KDHE Secretary; re-introducing legislation that was tabled; as directed by legislative leadership, requesting to meet with KANA to negotiate a compromise, which request was refused; as again directed by legislative leadership, subsequently meeting with KANA during an interim session, where again no compromise was forthcoming; and reintroducing licensure legislation which was tabled yet again. There was significant opposition by the KANA throughout the process. It is well known that there is a current and a predicted future healthcare worker shortage, which includes our specialty. Delegatory authority is a legitimate pathway to practice in Kansas and has been and is still being used successfully in several other states for Certified Anesthesiologist Assistants (CAA). Licensure is being required by the language in the ASC regulations to provide anesthesia care.

The only difference between the function of CAAs and nurse anesthetists in our area is that nurse anesthetists practice in Missouri and Kansas and CAAs can only practice in Missouri. There are many practices in Missouri with CAAs and CRNAs working together in the care team model with anesthesiologists. CAAs are supervised directly by physician anesthesiologists, so this would not impact the practices of CRNAs who work independently.

The experience in other states in which CAAs work also demonstrates that both nurse anesthetists and anesthesiologist assistants remain important members of the anesthesia care team, and retention of this model is essential to maintain quality anesthesia care for Kansans. This will not displace nurse anesthetists and that is not the experience of other states that have authorized CAAs; rather, it is expanding our ability to provide care for our patients with a professional with an alternative background, like a specially trained physician assistant. Anesthesiologists intend to continue to work with and employ both nurse anesthetists and anesthesiologist assistants. There are more than enough jobs to employ both.

Sincerely,

Kathy Perryman, M.D.
Representing the Kansas Society of Anesthesiologists