

Kansas Academy of Physician Associates

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill No. 126 Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare February 10, 2025

Chairwoman Gossage and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. I am here to express the Kansas Academy of Physician Associates (KAPA) strong support for Senate Bill No. 126, the Physician Assistant Licensure Compact.

KAPA is a constituent organization of the American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA), was founded 50 years ago and serves as the official representative voice for the PAs in Kansas. Its mission is to enhance the quality of medical care of the citizens of Kansas by promoting the profession and providing medical education resources to physician assistants, other health professionals, policymaking bodies and to the public.

In 1975, Kansas had 35 PAs practicing and today more than 1,450 PAs maintain an active license through the State Board of Healing Arts.

This compact is a crucial step forward in further improving healthcare access, enhancing workforce mobility, and ensuring better patient outcomes.

The concept of an interstate compact for physician assistants began in 2019, and has been jointly developed and supported by the AAPA, Federation of State Medical Boards, National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA), and Council of State Governments.

By adopting the PA Compact, Kansas will enhance its ability to attract high-quality practitioners who wish to relocate or expand patient services. This initiative will reduce barriers to employment, address workforce shortages quickly and efficiently, and support military personnel and spouses who are relocating.

About PA Licensure Compact

Healthcare needs do not follow state borders, and neither should the ability of healthcare providers to respond to those needs.

The PA Compact streamlines the ability for licensed PAs to work across state lines, significantly reducing the costs and time associated with obtaining individual licenses.

The PA Compact will simplify the licensure process and strengthen the healthcare workforce by making a PA's license more portable and flexible. This will improve access to care, including through telehealth, enhance continuity of care, and promote provider diversity—ultimately benefiting both patients and providers.

By offering a straightforward application process for compact privileges, qualified PAs can obtain authorization to deliver vital medical services to patients in each compact state where they want to practice.

To qualify, PAs must hold an active, unrestricted license in a member state and meet essential state specific eligibility standards, including criminal background checks, and maintain a valid certification from the NCCPA.

PAs granted the privilege to practice have a responsibility to follow the laws and regulations of the state where the care is being provided, ensuring accountability, and maintaining high standards in healthcare.

The PA Compact significantly enhances public protection by establishing essential minimum requirements for both the education and certification of PAs and their regulatory agencies. Additionally, the Compact Commission will create a data system to facilitate information sharing and coordination on disciplinary actions across participating states.

It is crucial to note, the PA Compact does not alter or extend the scope of practice for PAs practicing in Kansas, thereby preserving the integrity of existing regulations while promoting safety and quality in patient care.

PA Compact benefits

The compact offers numerous benefits for PAs, state regulators, patients and state workforces.

For PAs, this compact:

- Facilitates multistate practice by reducing the burden of maintaining multiple licenses.
- Expands employment opportunities in new and underserved markets.
- Improves continuity of care when patients or providers relocate.
- Avoids licensing delays which can mean periods of unemployment and financial hardship for applicants, especially for military families.

For state regulators, this compact:

- Preserves the existing state control of scope of practice, collaboration and supervision requirements, prescribing authority, and initial licensure system.
- Reduces application processing times.
- Allows a licensing state to discipline licensees and participating states to remove compact privileges.
- Facilitates cooperation among state licensure boards on investigations and disputes.
- Enhances public safety through a shared data system.
- Allows states to charge fees for compact privileges/licenses and for license renewals.
- Permits participating states to take part in the PA Compact Commission.

For state workforces, employers and patients, this compact:

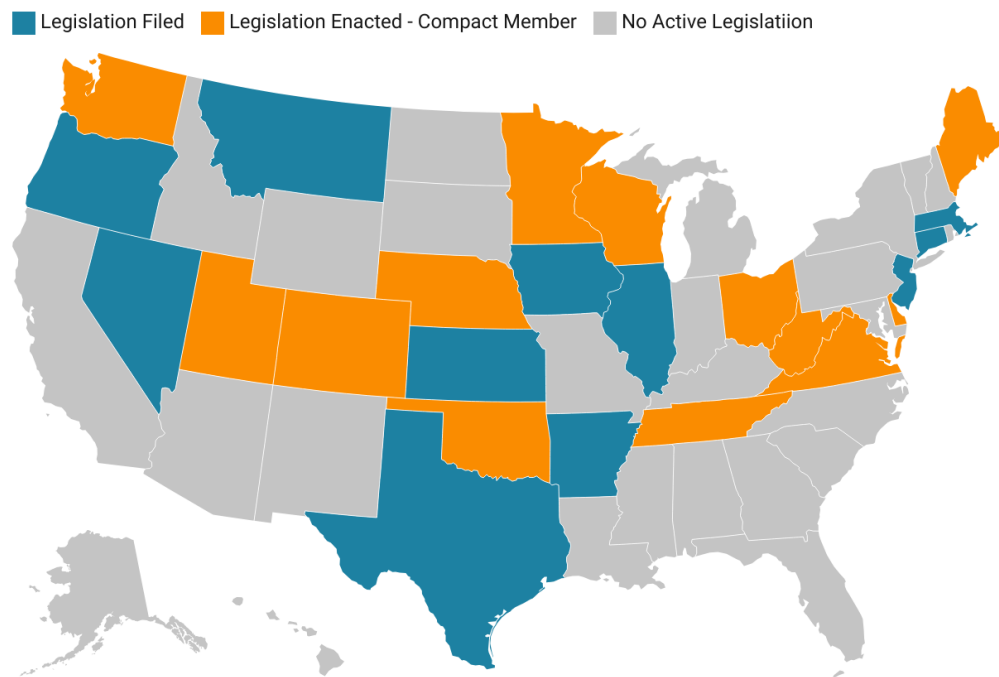
- Promotes workforce development and strengthens labor markets.
- Expands patient access to highly qualified practitioners.
- Increases collaboration among states.
- Facilitates practitioner mobility during public health emergencies.
- Reduces licensing costs and delays for hiring PAs.

State status

The threshold for compact activation has been reached thus triggering the formation of the PA Compact Commission. As of July 2024, thirteen states have officially adopted the compact and several more have adoption under consideration.

These states have enacted PA compact legislation

Colorado, Delaware, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin



PA Licensure Compact Commission

The inaugural meeting of the Compact Commission took place in late September. During this meeting, Commission delegates reviewed, discussed, and adopted a governance structure, bylaws, and various organizational matters. The Commission will begin to operate the compact by hiring staff, developing a data system, and writing rules.

Each participating state has one delegate on the Compact Commission, selected by that state's licensing board. The delegate can be either a current PA, a physician, a public member of a licensing board or PA Council/Committee, or an administrator of a licensing board.

Timeline

The Physician Assistant Licensure Compact is still early in the process. As interest increases and more states act on the Compact, progress could happen at a faster pace. Realistically, it may take 24 to 36 months for the compact to be fully operational.

The Compact Commission set a target date of early 2026 to begin granting compact privileges to practice. However, before applications can commence, the compact data system and state processes for administering these privileges need to be developed.

Final Considerations

The PA Compact operates in a manner comparable to other licensure compacts, ensuring that state laws and regulations remain unaffected unless explicitly specified within the agreement. This confirms that state regulatory authority is not compromised. Practitioners will continue to be licensed across U.S. states, territories, and Washington, D.C., promoting uniformity in licensure standards.

Under the legislation of the PA Compact, the compact commission is empowered to develop rules focused exclusively on the compact's implementation and administration.

In conclusion, the Physician Assistant Licensure Compact is a win-win for patients, healthcare professionals, and states. It promotes a more efficient, flexible, and equitable healthcare system.

Kansas Academy of Physician Associates encourages the Committee to support Senate Bill No. 126 and to work towards its adoption in our state. By doing so, we can ensure that more patients have access to the quality care they deserve.

Thank you for your consideration.

Doug Smith
Executive Director
Kansas Academy of Physician Associates