

Kansas Academy of Physician Assistants
Remarks Concerning House Bill No.2770
House Health and Human Services Committee
February 18, 2004

Chairman Morrison and Members of r the House Health and Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in favor of HB 2770. I am Doug Smith and I serve as the Executive Director for the Kansas Academy of Physician Assistants. House Bill No. 2770 addresses some old terminology, "physician's assistants" and incorporates the correct name of the profession, physician assistants. But the primary focus of the bill is to remove the limitation of number of physician assistants (PAs) that a physician may supervise. The current statute states in part, "No responsible physician shall have under such physician's direction and supervision more than two physician assistants." This language would be deleted and authority will be given to the individual practice and the Board of Healing Arts to regulate the number of PAs that a physician may supervise.

Historically, the concept of the physician assistant was born during WWII when there was a significant shortage of physicians and Dr. Eugene Stead developed a fast track program for training physicians. Dr. Stead refined the concept and founded the first physician assistant program at Duke University from which 3 PAs graduated on October 6, 1967. Since that time the physician profession has flourished and today, in Kansas, there are nearly 600 PAs licensed by the Board of Healing Arts. The first legislation for PAs in Kansas was passed in 1973. Though we've grown from being registered to licensed, and rules and regulations have changed over the past 30 years, Kansas PAs (and the American Academy of Physician Assistants) have remained committed to quality patient care and dependent practice with physicians.

It's time to remove the statute which limits the physician's utilization of PAs. The American Medical Association Council on Medical Service stated in their 1998 report that "Supervising physicians are the most knowledgeable of their own supervisory abilities and practice style, as well as the training and experience of physician extenders in their practice...Specified ratios of supervisory physicians to physician extenders might restrict appropriate provision of care and could reduce access to care." Removing the two PA limit will allow for flexibility and appropriate utilization of PAs in Kansas and improve patient access to care.

We appreciate your consideration and encourage your favorable action on House Bill No. 2770.