



Legislative Update from the Chair of the Arizona Regulatory Board of Physician Assistants (ARBoPA)

Dear Physician Assistant:

As the Board Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to share some recent legislative developments with the State's licensed Physician Assistant community.

Recent statistics indicate that there are 115,000 Physician Assistants (PAs) practicing nationwide. Arizona has 3,200 licensed PAs, or almost 3% of the nation's licensed PAs. As one of the 3,200 Arizona licensed PAs, were you aware that there is important legislation that goes before your State Legislature every year that may impact your practice in the State of Arizona?

This legislative session, HB 2055, the PA Board Continuation Bill sponsored by Representative Heather Carter, (hcarte@azleg.gov), is being considered. This bill would extend the existence of the Arizona Regulatory Board of Physician Assistants (ARBoPA) as a licensing and regulatory body for another 8 years. This is significant inasmuch as Arizona has one of the few independent boards in the country regulating PAs.

In addition, ARBoPA proposed legislation, HB 2250, which would allow PAs to prescribe schedule II and III medications for up to 90-days (excluding opioids and benzodiazepines). HB2250 would also eliminate the requirement for a supervising physician's name to appear on a PAs prescription, and removes the requirement that dispensed drugs be obtained strictly from the supervising physician.

You may also already be aware that the Legislature passed the Opioid Epidemic Act in special session last month. I strongly encourage you to educate yourself about the bill, as it contains many statutory changes related to health care and aimed at combatting the opioid epidemic. Included in these changes are restrictions on the length and dosages of opioid prescriptions; prohibitions against practitioner dispensing of opioids, and e-prescribing requirements. Of particular note, the bill mandates that all health care practitioners with a DEA certificate obtain three hours of opioid-related, substance-use disorder related or addiction related continuing medical education every renewal cycle. The bill is effective April 26, 2018, so some of you may need to fulfill this requirement in the near future. More information about the opioid epidemic and a helpful guide to the Act can be found at <http://azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/injury-prevention/opioid-prevention/index.php>.

At its meeting on February 28, 2018, ARBoPA unanimously voted to issue a resolution in support of amending Senate Bill 1195 sponsored by Senator Nancy Barto (nbarto@azleg.gov) to more clearly allow PAs to be included with other health care practitioners as providers of mental health services and to act as admitting officers for individuals experiencing mental health crises.

I encourage you check the ARBoPA web page (www.azpa.gov) which will be updated frequently with new changes in State Law regarding PAs, so make it a habit to stop by weekly and remain informed. Also, if you want your voice heard as a PA in Arizona, I also encourage you to contact your State government representatives.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Myles Whitfield PA-C'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials 'PA-C' written in a smaller, more legible font at the end of the signature.

Myles Whitfield PA-C
Chairman, Arizona Regulatory Board of Physician Assistants
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