



**Testimony of Jennifer M. Orozco, MMS, PA-C, DFAAPA
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Submitted to the South Dakota Senate Health & Human Services Committee
In Support of S.B. 134, Revising Provisions Related to Physician Assistants
February 9, 2022
On Behalf of the American Academy of PAs**

Chairman Steinhauer, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Jennifer Orozco, and I am the president of the American Academy of PAs. I have been a practicing PA for almost 20 years and I currently serve as an Assistant Professor and the Director of Advanced Practice Providers for more than 400 physician associates and advanced practice registered nurses at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Illinois.

I am here to express AAPA's strong support for S.B. 134. This important legislation would eliminate outdated administrative burdens and allow PAs to practice to the full extent of their education, training and experience.

There are currently nearly 700 PAs licensed in South Dakota, with the average South Dakota PA seeing at least 50 patients each week. PAs are a vital part of South Dakota's healthcare system, and it is essential that we eliminate outdated healthcare barriers that prevent South Dakota patients from receiving care.

Among other provisions, S.B. 134 would allow PAs with more than 1,040 hours of post-graduation clinical practice experience to practice without a specific agreement with a physician. This change would align PA practice requirements with those of their nurse practitioner colleagues and give employers the flexibility to structure their healthcare teams in the manner best suited to care for their patients. As a hospital director for advanced practice providers, I can tell you how important it is to have PAs and NPs subject to the same rules of the road.

One message that I would like to be clear about, PAs would not practice "independently" under this legislation. Rather, PAs would continue to be "required" to collaborate with other healthcare providers and refer or transfer patients as necessary and appropriate.

S.B. 134 is similar to laws recently enacted in North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. It is also similar to an early 2020 Executive Order issued by Governor Noem that suspended the supervision requirement for PAs treating COVID-19 patients.

Now more than ever, patients need access to qualified healthcare providers. PAs stand ready to support South Dakota patients, and this important bill will allow them to do just that.

AAPA strongly believes S.B. 134 would improve access to the high-quality patient care PAs already provide in South Dakota and we are pleased to testify in favor of it today. However, I would also be remiss if I did not bring to the Committee's attention continued, intentionally misleading statements by the South Dakota State Medical Association regarding the position of the Physician Assistant Education Association, or PAEA, to stir up opposition.

Last year, during testimony on similar legislation (H.B. 1163), SDSMA falsely testified that PAEA opposed the underlying policy, despite having been informed twice by PAEA that it supported the policy. I have included with my written testimony a letter sent by PAEA to Chairman Kevin Jensen regarding this false testimony.

Yet, as of February 7, 2022, SDSMA's online advocacy action center continues to perpetuate PAEA opposition – which is patently untrue.

Over the course of the last two years, the pandemic has demonstrated the need for more flexible laws that allow highly qualified healthcare providers to respond to patient needs. AAPA is proud to support this legislation and we stand behind it on its merits and mission – to benefit the people of South Dakota. We respectfully encourage the Committee to independently review the merits of S.B. 134 and its benefit to South Dakota patients.

AAPA urges support of this important legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.