CCH CHERRY COUNTY Hospital and Clinic

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Licensure Unit
Attn: Technical Review Committee
PO Box 95026
Lincoln, NE 68509-5026

Attn: Technical Review Committee, Board of Health, and Dr. Anthone

My name is Kyle Kellum, and I am the CEO of Cherry County Hospital and Clinic (CCH). I am writing to urge you to recommend against the licensing of Anesthesiologist Assistants (AAs) in Nebraska. It is vitally important to Nebraska rural hospitals to maintain health care services in our local communities. These facilities, like CCH serve to stabilize and treat trauma patients, sometimes resulting in a transfer, maintain a safe and effective OB program (including C-Section here at CCH), perform routine procedures and surgeries, and provide lifesaving care during a pandemic. Rural hospitals are not only a lifeline for patients, but for the entire community.

CRNAs provide the majority of anesthetic care in Nebraska and 100% of the anesthetics delivered at critical access hospitals. Currently, approximately 64,000 CRNAs practice in the United States in both rural and urban settings. Without CRNA's, CCH would not be able to provide the necessary services to our community, or those which make us financially viable.

Anesthesiologists Assistants (AAs) were first introduced in Ohio and Georgia over 40 years ago. To date there are approximately 3,000 in the United States. They reside primarily in Ohio, Georgia, and Florida. An AA may not work without being directly supervised by a physician anesthesiologist. This requires the direct on-site physical presence of a physician anesthesiologist at all times. Consequently, AAs are a nonfactor in alleviating patient access to care issues.

Nebraska should prioritize educating, recruiting, and retaining independently licensed CRNAs and physicians to ensure continued quality and access to care. AAs are not the answer to the healthcare shortage in the immediate future. In fact, introducing AAs in Nebraska will only further exacerbate the shortage of our independent providers. Rural hospitals depend on CRNAs to keep their doors open by providing quality, cost-effective care.

Licensure of AAs are not in the best interest of rural Nebraska for many reasons, and here are a few:

- They cannot practice independently.
- They increase cost.
- They do not improve patient access to anesthesia services.
- They cannot be used in rural Nebraska due to the need for an anesthesiologist on-site.
- CRNA's will leave Nebraska to practice where they are needed in rural America

We urge you to recommend AGAINST licensure of Anesthesiologist Assistants.

Sincerely,

Kyle Kellum, MHA, RHCEOC
Chief Executive Officer

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