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Clarkson College
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August 22, 2022

DHHS Licensure Unit
Attn: Credentialing Review
PO Box 94986
Lincoln, NE 68509-4986

Dear Members of the Technical Review Committee:

On behalf of the Clarkson College Nurse Anesthesia Program, I am writing to express our opposition to the proposed credentialing application to license and authorize Anesthesiologist Assistants (AA) to practice within the state of Nebraska.

The licensure of AAs in Nebraska will reduce the number of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) graduates produced by the two existing educational programs in Nebraska, Clarkson College and Bryan College of Health Sciences. A decrease in CRNA graduates would decrease the overall workforce of anesthesiology providers. CRNAs are the sole anesthesia provider in 100% of the Critical Access hospitals in Nebraska. A decrease in CRNAs would be detrimental to the great state of Nebraska.

CRNA trainees must have a wide variety of clinical experiences during their training including surgical specialties such as cardiovascular, neurosurgery, and trauma etc. Experiences with specific patient populations including pediatrics, obstetrics, and geriatrics etc. are also required. Many of these experiences are completed at the urban hospitals. The clinical experiences available in these surgical specialties and patient populations are the determining factor for the number of CRNAs graduated and put out into the workforce each year. If AAs are allowed in urban hospitals, then the number of CRNA trainees who can obtain these required clinical experiences is significantly reduced. Therefore, there would be a decrease in CRNA graduates.

CRNA trainees cannot obtain clinical experience in an operating room (OR) staffed by an AA. If AAs are placed in NE hospitals, they will be utilized as assistants to the physician Anesthesiologists in the larger hospitals; the hospitals which include the surgical specialties required for CRNA trainees to graduate. This is because an AA can only practice if a physician Anesthesiologist is available for medical direction. Once certified, a CRNA can practice autonomously in Nebraska without medical direction.

A modest number of AAs placed in the few Nebraska urban hospitals will have a relatively large negative impact on the number of CRNAs produced. Clarkson College has increased in size from 9 graduates in 2013 to 15 in 2023 and is projected to graduate 22 by 2025. We have an application currently in progress to increase to 25 per cohort.

Prior to acceptance into a CRNA program, each RN applicant must fulfill specific admission requirements. CRNAs are the only anesthesia provider that has required critical care experience prior to acceptance into a formal anesthesia program. Therefore, both CRNA programs in Nebraska are bringing skilled, critically care trained CRNAs to the workforce. These CRNAs will not only answer the anesthesia provider shortage in our state, but provide safe, quality, and effective anesthesia care to each of their patients.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our concerns. Please feel free to contact me at any time if I can provide any further assistance and information.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Rochleau DNP, CRNA

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