

Two bills FAPA may fight in the 2018 Florida Legislative Session, by Corinne Mixon, FAPA Lobbyist

The 2018 Florida Legislative Session is rapidly approaching. The Academy is actively lobbying against two legislative proposals that threatened the PA profession during the 2017 Legislative Session. As of now, neither proposal has been released in bill format.

American University of Antigua (AUA) Alternate Path to Licensure Bill –

Overview –

- a. The AUA would like to start its own PA program and send its students back to the State of Florida to work. However, the ARC PA does not accredit schools that are located outside of the United States unless they are satellite campuses.
 - b. Florida law requires that all PAs be trained at an ARC PA accredited program and pass the NCCPA PANCE test. Under current law, if AUA started a PA school, its graduates would not be able to take the PANCE according to the NCCPA's internal bylaws.
1. Past efforts by AUA –
 - a. Over the years, AUA has approached ARC PA wishing to seek accreditation, but the ARC PA does not have the bandwidth to accredit schools outside of the USA. Because all 50 states require a combination of ARC PA accredited education and passage of the PANCE as a condition of licensure, there is no state where graduates of an AUA program could obtain a PA license. Under current law, it would make no sense for the AUA to establish a PA program alongside its medical school. FAPA has held many discussions with AUA, but the issue must be solved between ARC PA and AUA. Since AUA has not made progress, they are seeking legislation in Florida, and possibly in other states.
 - b. AUA crafted language to create an “alternate pathway” to licensure. The pathway would license graduates of PA programs with an accreditation from the World Health Organization in Florida. A statewide test would be created as an assessment tool.
 - c. Over the past two legislative sessions the AUA has aggressively sought a legislative champion for their effort to create an alternate path, but FAPAs relationships with lawmakers and advocacy efforts have kept the bill from being filed.
 2. FAPA Concerns –
 - a. FAPA, the FAPA Faculty Relations Committee and its educational partners support a high level of aptitude and clinical success for the PA profession. Any diversion from that, in Florida or any other state, threatens the understanding of the profession by patients could worsen patient outcomes.
 - b. Graduates of these programs will not be permitted to become certified since they cannot take the PANCE and will struggle to find jobs.
 - c. Graduates will obtain licenses, but struggle to practice since they cannot be reimbursed under CMS guidelines and most insurances
 3. What's next – the AUA is seeking bill sponsors as we speak. FAPA will continue to fight these efforts, but will encourage dialog between AUA, NCCPA and ARC PA.

Doctor of Medical Sciences Licensure –

1. Overview—

- a. Some PA schools in other states now provide an “advanced degree” for PA graduates known as a Doctor of Medical Sciences or DMS.
- b. Although the DMS degree holds a certain designation, no state recognizes it as a separate license within the PA profession.
- c. For many years, FAPA has fought to expand the scope of practice of Florida’s licensed PAs. It is now stated in statute that PAs may carry out any practice-related-activity that is not expressly prohibited in the PA statute(s). As a result, a PA may do almost anything that his/her supervising physician deems appropriate based on his/her education and training including prescribing controlled substances and initiating a Baker Act, just to name a couple.

2. Past Efforts by DMS programs –

- a. Two schools located in other states have banded together to create an additional PA license in the State of Florida by changing Florida Statutes. A bill was filed last year that would create a second category of PA for people who have received a DMS degree.
- b. FAPA and other medical provider associations opposed this legislation and it did not receive a hearing during the 2017 Legislative Session as a result of this opposition.

3. FAPA concerns –

- a. Any PA in Florida who is licensed is trusted to diagnose and treat patients with a high degree of efficacy. Physicians and patients trust PAs to make medical decisions and practice at the highest level of scope.
- b. FAPA is concerned that dissecting the profession will result in all currently licensed PAs who do not also have DMS degrees becoming a lower category of provider.
- c. FAPA has worked diligently to ensure that PAs can practice to the fullest extent of their training and education. There is no need to create a new type of PA. Such a license could confuse patients and employers.

4. Next steps –

- a. It is likely that the bill will return this legislative session and FAPA will oppose the legislation. FAPA will continue to value any advanced training that PAs may seek, but we will oppose the creation of a license to recognize a small number of graduates from out of state schools.