



LEXINGTON, S.C. May 17, 2019 – The South Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants (SCAPA) commends Gov. Henry McMaster for signing Senate Bill 132 into law on May 13, 2019. The enactment of this legislation will go into effect August 11, 2019, and will allow PAs to increase access to care for patients and families throughout the state through its modernization of the regulation of PA practice.

"We are excited that the General Assembly continues to show their commitment to improving access to healthcare for all South Carolinians. When providers are able to work collaboratively at the top of their skill sets, patients win," said Thornton Kirby, President & CEO, South Carolina Hospital Association.

The new law will expedite PA entry into the healthcare workforce by streamlining licensure processes and removing archaic, extraneous requirements that serve no public protection role. For example, prior to the enactment of Senate Bill 132, South Carolina was one of 10 states that required PAs to pass a jurisprudence exam as part of the licensure process.

"I applaud South Carolina legislators for putting patients above politics. After evaluating the medical evidence, key outcome data, and best practices legislators are even more committed to removing barriers in the form of restrictive scope of practice laws," said SCAPA Legislative Co-Chair, Kevin Harmon, MSPAS, PA-C.

PAs are medical providers who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a principal healthcare provider. With thousands of hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs practice in every medical setting and specialty, improving healthcare access and quality.

"Admission to PA school is highly competitive with many student applicants coming in with a concentration in pre-medicine. PA students have diverse patient care backgrounds that include roles such as paramedics, registered dietitians, researchers and nurses," said SCAPA Legislative Co-Chair Megan Fulton, MSPAS, PA-C.

States are increasingly removing barriers in an effort to expand access to the high-quality care that PAs provide. A June 2018 study conducted by the Hamilton Project, an economic research group and think tank within the Brookings Institution, concludes that removing barriers to PA care would alleviate healthcare shortages and would improve efficiency and productivity in the delivery of healthcare — all with no adverse effects on patient outcomes.

“PAs are playing a critical role in addressing healthcare shortages throughout the country. We want to extend our gratitude to Gov. McMaster and the legislature for their efforts to ensure patients in South Carolina continue to benefit from the high-quality care PAs provide,” said SCAPA President Jen Marshall, MSPAS, PA-C.

“Many people in South Carolina lack adequate access to quality healthcare, especially in rural areas – partly because South Carolina ranks 40th among the states with just 77.5 physicians per 100,000 residents. Nationally, the number is 90.1 per 100,000. This problem is compounded by a strong bias in the distribution of those physicians to urban or suburban areas. S. 132 eases this access problem by empowering physician assistants to provide health care services that are commensurate with their increased level of education and training,” said Senator Tom Davis.

“I am proud the General Assembly has passed S. 132, which allows physicians assistants to provide more services to patients throughout South Carolina. As the lead sponsor of the House version of this bill, this vital legislation represents another step forward in providing quality healthcare and access to services for all South Carolinians,” said Representative Gary Clary.

The PA profession is one of the fastest growing in the country. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the profession will increase 37 percent from 2016 to 2026, significantly faster than the average for all occupations. Currently, there are more than 131,500 PAs practicing in all 50 states, D.C., and U.S. territories. Today, there are more than 1,600 PAs in South Carolina.

“It is clear that the future of South Carolina’s healthcare can only be met with an increased number of highly qualified physician assistants being an integral part of the process, particularly in rural South Carolina. This bill was needed to ensure that South Carolina residents’ healthcare needs can be met,” said Senator Hutto.

Additionally the updated law allows for the following:

- Full prescriptive authority including increased prescriptive authority for Schedule 2 narcotic medications
- Revision of onsite practice requirement: A PA with less than 2 years of continuous practice or switching specialties must practice with the supervising physician for at least 60 before being allowed to practice at an offsite location, with a limited exception for retail medical clinics. The 60 day requirement may be waived in writing by the supervising physician
- 1:6 Ratio (Supervising/Collaborating Physician: PA/APRN (can be up to 6 total APPs combined)
- Chart co-signature requirements determined at the practice level
- PAs can start practice 10 business days (or earlier if approved) after their scope of practice guidelines are submitted to the board of medical examiners
- A PA may sign specified documents on behalf of the supervising physician or alternate supervising physician
- End of life care: pronounce death, certify the manner and cause of death, sign death certificates, issue an order for a patient to receive appropriate services from a licensed hospice, execute a do not resuscitate order

- Authorization for PAs to delegate a limited list of functions to unlicensed personnel (CMAs)
- Certify that a student is unable to attend school but may benefit from receiving instruction given in his home or hospital

SCAPA Legislative Co-Chairs and SCAPA President give special thanks to the following for the education to legislators and the representation of our bill, Ted Riley, Attorney/SCAPA Representative and Tara Boone of the Riley, Pope, and Laney Law Firm. It was an absolute pleasure working with this team.

About SCAPA

The South Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants (SCAPA) is your professional organization and functions as a volunteer association consisting of an Executive Director, Board of Directors, and various committees. Together with other members of the health care team, legislators and the American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA), we are working to eliminate barriers to care and enhance existing healthcare delivery systems. SCAPA serves as the voice of the profession for our state.