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January 19, 2018

L. Gail Curtis, MPAS, PA-C, DFAAPA  
President and Chair of the Board  
American Academy of Physician Assistants  
2318 Mill Road, Suite 1300  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Ms. Curtis:

Thank you for your correspondence regarding recent action taken by the American Medical Association (AMA) House of Delegates related to the American Academy of Physician Assistants' (AAPA) new policy. I appreciate your candor, and am always open to listening to your concerns.

The AMA has long valued the commitment of physician assistants to the team-based model of care, and greatly respects the contributions physician assistants make to the health care team. Physician assistants are an integral part of physician-led health care teams across the country. We are nonetheless deeply concerned about the practical implications of AAPA's policy and related guidance, such as AAPA's revised Guidelines for State Regulation of PAs (Guidelines). In particular, we believe that AAPA's policy and Guidelines could fragment the health care team by explicitly removing provisions in state law and regulation that require a relationship with a physician in order for physician assistants to practice; encouraging independent regulation of physician assistants.

We are particularly concerned that licensing boards will have no way to ensure that physician assistants are practicing in teams, and are not practicing independently. Despite assurances made in AAPA's policy and Guidelines, the fact remains that neither actually requires physician assistants to practice in teams. We have raised this issue with AAPA leadership and staff, and have offered language that would help mitigate our concerns. Unfortunately, we have not found a willingness to address the noted inconsistency between the intent and the actual potential effect of AAPA's policy and Guidelines.

Taken together, we continue to believe it is reasonable to conclude that AAPA's policy and Guidelines represent not a reaffirmation of the physician assistant profession's commitment to team-based practice, but rather, a roadmap to independent physician assistant practice.

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Physician-led, team-based health care is one step in ensuring that patients receive the most patient-centered, highest quality care possible. All professions in a health care team bring with them great strengths and unique perspectives that can be utilized when looking at how to provide the best possible care to patients. With this spirit of teamwork in mind, I hope you will take this feedback into consideration as AAPA revises the AAPA Model State Legislation for Physician Assistants and contemplates future revisions to its policy and Guidelines.

Sincerely,



David O. Barbe, MD, MHA

cc: Stephen Hanson