

IAFP Testimony in opposition of SB 218
Asim Jaffer, MD – Chair of IAFP Government Relations Committee
March 8, 2023

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Glowiak Hilton and members of the Senate Licensed Activities committee. I am Dr. Asim Jaffer and am testifying as Chair of the Government Relations Committee for the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians, which has over 4,700 members throughout the state. I am Dr. Asim Jaffer and am testifying as Chair of the Government Relations Committee for the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians, which has over 4,700 members throughout the state. I trained as a Family Medicine Resident at SIU in Carbondale and have spent the last 15 years teaching and practicing at the Family Medicine Residency at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Peoria. As a Family Physician, I have worked in just about every setting including the Emergency Room, Urgent Care, hospital inpatient, as well as an outpatient clinic, covering the full spectrum of patients from prenatal to end of life care. In addition to this, I am also the medical director for our Hospice and our Palliative Care programs. In my experience, I have been able to work closely with physician assistants in all of these settings.

The current education, training, and practice models are developed with the expectation of a physician assistant and physician partnership based on **collaboration**.

As a family physician, I am educated and trained to provide complex differential diagnoses, develop a treatment plan, and order and interpret tests within the context of the patient's overall health condition. A physician assistant, on the other hand, is specifically trained to support a physician treating patients after diagnosis, assessing progress, and performing routine procedures under physician supervision. Substitution of non-physician health care providers for physicians is not in the best interest of patients. Truly, patients need access to every member of their health care team—primary care physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and all the other professionals practicing to the full extent of their license.

Beyond significant differences in the educational and training requirements between physicians and physician assistants, there are increased costs when non-physician scope is increased:

- 8.4% of physician assistants prescribed opioids to over half of their patients compared to 1.3% of physicians.
- X-Ray ordering increased 441% among non-physicians.
- Non-physicians needed two times the number of biopsies to screen for skin cancer.
- Patients were 15% more likely to receive an antibiotic from a non-physician.

Not only are there far fewer hours of training and no specialty certifications for physician assistants to work in a field, the current education, training, and practice models for physician assistants are developed with the expectation of a partnership based on collaboration with a physician. By comparison, I have board certification in family medicine with ten times the hours of training for independent practice, which allows me to stay within a safe scope of practice based on clinical skill and training.

For these reasons, the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians opposes Senate Bill 218 allowing for the independent practice of physician assistants.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.