

Testimony on HB 765

House Professional Licensure Committee

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By

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Good morning, Chairwoman Harhart, Chairman Readshaw, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I am the President of the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians, which represents more than 5,500 family medicine physicians and residents, and also students who specialize or are interested in family medicine. As you know, our specialty cares for the patient over her or his entire life. Our organization's membership includes doctors who deliver babies, provide pediatric and adolescent care, and of course, adult and geriatric care.

Respectfully, we oppose House Bill 765.

Nurse practitioners do not have the same training as a physician. Physician training lasts at least eleven years for a physician, versus fewer than seven years of training for a nurse practitioner. Importantly, all physicians have at least three years of residency training, and once practicing, rigorous continuing education and board certification requirements.

Allow me to briefly take you on the journey of becoming a physician.

During undergraduate education, a list of prerequisite courses must be completed before applying to medical school, ranging from biology to organic chemistry. The Medical College Admission Test (commonly referred to as the MCAT) is taken as an undergraduate to assess problem solving and critical thinking skills, along with knowledge of natural, behavioral, and social science principles. In 2014, there were 49,480 medical school applicants and only 20,343 acceptances, highlighting that fewer than half of those who apply for medical school are actually accepted. The mean undergraduate GPA was 3.69 among matriculants.

In addition to institutional assessments of knowledge during medical school, the United States Medical Licensing Examination is completed as a three-step process for medical licensure. Each “step” is taken as a separate exam at different points in training, and includes a section completed with live standardized patients and another with computer-based simulations.

Similarly, following completion of each clinical rotation during medical school, the student must pass a National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) subject exam in that particular area, in specialties ranging from family medicine to surgery. Put simply, the average medical student in her or his clinical years can expect to take a national standardized subject exam every six to eight weeks.

Upon graduation, the medical student, now officially a “doctor” by merit of having obtained a medical degree, still must complete a residency in the particular area of medicine desired to practice, adding at least three additional years of training. Last, but certainly not least, completion of residency is followed by the requirement to complete a board examination in the physician’s specialty. If we total these “standardized exams,” the average individual will need to successfully complete

twelve standardized examinations before being allowed to independently practice medicine, with no less than eleven years of training following high school.

Please know nurse practitioners are our physician members' colleagues, and an important part of a health care team. We unequivocally value their work. However, there is no symmetry to their education and that of a physician. We believe in a physician-led patient centered medical home model of care, in which nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and all members of the health care team work together to ensure the best patient care. At the end of the day, patients are truly who we care about most.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.