



American College of Surgeons- Arkansas Chapter



Arkansas Trauma Society

The Honorable Matthew Shepherd
Speaker of the House
Arkansas House of Representatives
Arkansas State Capitol
500 Woodlane Ave.
Little Rock, 72201

The Honorable Jimmy Hickey, Jr.
President Pro Tempore
Arkansas Senate
Arkansas State Capitol
500 Woodlane Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72201

The Honorable Cecile Bledsoe
Chair of the Arkansas Senate Public Health
Committee
Arkansas Senate
Arkansas State Capitol
500 Woodlane Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72201

The Honorable Jack Ladyman
Chair of the Arkansas House Public
Health Committee
Arkansas House of Representatives
Arkansas State Capitol
500 Woodlane Ave.
Little Rock, 72201

Dear Speaker Shepard, President Hickey, Chair Bledsoe, Chair Ladyman;

On behalf of the Arkansas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), we are writing to share our opposition to House Bill 1198. This legislation would remove the physician supervision requirement for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) and permit them to practice independently. Doing so would not be in the best interest of the patients of Arkansas as it would jeopardize patient safety and impede the provision of patient centered, physician led care.

The ACS has a long history of addressing matters relating to quality patient care and safety. We are concerned that removing the required supervision of physician would allow CRNAs to practice without the same regulatory oversight and education requirements imposed on medical doctors. Practicing outside of their scope of practice and without proper supervision by a medical doctor may open up Arkansas citizens to unsafe environments and procedures, such as a potential proliferation of pain clinics or other facilities at a time when overutilization of opioid medication is a definite problem.

Nurse anesthetists provide an important role in the delivery of health care. However, their level of education, training and experience does not justify removing physicians from providing medical expertise and supervision during the administration of anesthesia. Physicians are uniquely qualified, by extensive education and training, to provide medical diagnosis, care, and treatment of the patient. Because of their medical knowledge, they are best able to recognize, intervene and manage the medical complications that exist before, during and after surgery. While anesthesia has become safer, plenty of risks remain. Those risks necessitate retaining physician supervision of nurse anesthetists.



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We believe removing physician supervision of CRNAs could place patients at a great risk. Arkansas patients do not deserve a lower standard of care when the current standard provides high quality anesthesia care throughout the state.

Importantly, as the largest surgical organization in the state, representing surgeons in all regions of Arkansas, from metropolitan to very rural areas, we have not received any reports of lack of ability to perform needed surgical procedures due to lack of anesthesia services. Any claimed lack of anesthesia services is not, in fact, occurring according to our 400+ members in Arkansas.

In the interest of patient safety, we oppose House Bill 1198 and any other efforts leading to the removal of the physician supervision requirement for CRNAs, such as "opting-out" of the CMS supervision requirement that could follow passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Bruce Jones, MD FACS
Governor
Arkansas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons

Lee Forestiere, MD FACS
Past Governor
Arkansas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons

Charles D. Mabry MD FACS
Past 1st Vice-President, American College of Surgeons

cc: Karen Whatley, Director of Legislative Affairs, Office of Gov. Asa Hutchinson
Alison Williams, Chief of Staff, Office of Gov. Asa Hutchinson
Dr. Gregory Bledsoe, Arkansas Surgeon General