

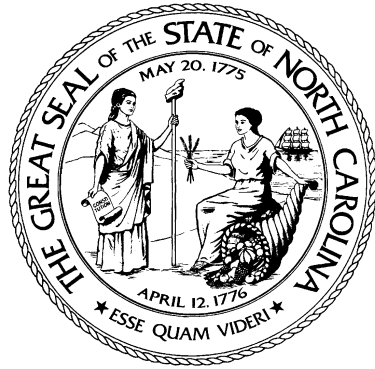
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON NEW LICENSING BOARDS

Assessment Report

For

**ANESTHESIOLOGIST
ASSISTANTS**

House Bill 503
Senate Bill 394



LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON NEW LICENSING BOARDS

April 27, 2005

The Legislative Committee on New Licensing Boards is pleased to release this assessment report on the certification of anesthesiologist assistants. This report constitutes both the preliminary and final assessment report.

Representative Drew Saunders

**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON NEW LICENSING BOARDS
(2005-2006)**

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PREFACE

The Legislative Committee on New Licensing Boards is a 9-member joint committee of the House and Senate created and governed by statute (Article 18A of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes). The primary purpose of the Committee is to evaluate the need for a new licensing board or the proposed licensing of previously unregulated practitioners by an existing board. The Committee has been in existence since 1985.

The Committee solicits written and oral testimony on each licensing proposal in carrying out its duty to determine whether the proposal meets the following criteria:

- 1) Whether the unregulated practice of the profession can substantially endanger the public health, safety, or welfare, and whether the potential for such harm is recognizable and not remote or dependent upon tenuous argument.
- 2) Whether the profession possesses qualities that distinguish it from ordinary labor.
- 3) Whether practice of the profession requires specialized skill or training.
- 4) Whether a substantial majority of the public has the knowledge or experience to evaluate the practitioner's competence.
- 5) Whether the public can effectively be protected by other means.
- 6) Whether licensure would have a substantial adverse economic impact upon consumers of the practitioner's good or services.

The Committee issues an assessment report on its findings and recommendations. The recommendation in the report is not binding on other committees considering the proposal.

HOUSE BILL 503 and SENATE BILL 394

AUTHORIZE LICENSURE/ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANTS

BACKGROUND¹

Current Standards.

Anesthesiologist assistants ("AAs") are highly skilled allied health professionals who work as members of the Anesthesia Care Team under the direct supervision of licensed anesthesiologists in the delivery of anesthesia care services. Licensure of AAs will allow qualified professionals in North Carolina to help fill the critical need for additional mid-level anesthesia providers in the State. Professional education and training includes a four-year pre-med degree, graduation from a 27-month masters degree program, 2500 hours of clinical training and certification in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS). The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accredits AA training programs. There are three accredited AA educational programs in the country: Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia; Case Western Reserve in Ohio; and a consortium between South University and Mercer School of Medicine in Savannah, Georgia. Certification by the National Commission for Certification of Anesthesiologist Assistants (NCCAA) in collaboration with the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) is currently the accepted certification standard in the United States. To maintain certification by the NCCAA, AAs must successfully complete a recertification exam every six years. Federal law recognizes AAs as qualified providers eligible for reimbursement from Medicare and

¹ **Source:** *Response to Questionnaire for the Legislative Committee for New Licensing Boards.* A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this report.

Medicaid and nine states as well as the District of Columbia license AAs to provide anesthesia services under the supervision of a licensed anesthesiologist:

ALABAMA
FLORIDA
GEORGIA
KENTUCKY
MISSOURI
NEW MEXICO
OHIO
SOUTH CAROLINA
VERMONT

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Who Must Be Licensed. A person desiring to provide anesthesia services as an anesthesiologist assistant will need to be licensed by the North Carolina Medical Board. The licensing requirements proposed in Senate Bill 394 and House Bill 503 will apply to all AAs practicing in North Carolina. There are no exemptions from the licensure requirement.

Initial Licensure Requirements. Every applicant for licensure as an anesthesiologist assistant in the State shall satisfy the North Carolina Medical Board that the applicant is of good moral character and meets any other qualifications for the issuance of a license as determined by the Board.

Licensure Renewal Requirements. All licenses to practice as an anesthesiologist assistant shall be renewed in accordance with the rules adopted by the North Carolina Medical Board.

Fees. The North Carolina Medical Board will set the fee for initial and annual registration of anesthesiologist assistants at 'a reasonable amount'.

Disciplinary Actions. The Board may deny, refuse to renew, suspend, or revoke an application or license or order probation or issue a reprimand to the applicant or licensee in accordance with the rules adopted by the North Carolina Medical Board.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ANESTHESIOLOGIST ASSISTANTS

Findings. The Legislative Committee on New Licensing Boards finds that the sponsors have met the six criteria by which the Committee judges licensure proposals. Specifically, the Committee finds that:

- 1) The unregulated practice of anesthesiologist assistants can substantially harm or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare since anesthesiologist assistants, as members of an Anesthesia Care Team, are directly involved in the delivery of anesthesia care services.
- 2) The profession possesses qualities that distinguish it from ordinary labor since professional education and training includes a four-year pre-med degree, graduation from a 27-month masters degree program, 2500 hours of clinical training and certification in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS).
- 3) The practice of anesthesiologist assistants requires specialized skill or training.
- 4) A substantial majority of the public does not have the knowledge or experience to evaluate the competence of an anesthesiologist assistant.
- 5) The public cannot be effectively protected by other means.
- 6) Licensure would not have a substantial adverse economic impact upon the recipient of the anesthesiologist assistant's services.

Recommendation. The Legislative Committee on New Licensing Boards recommends the licensing of anesthesiologist assistants. This assessment report constitutes both the preliminary and final assessment report for the licensure of anesthesiologist assistants. The report is based on the proposed licensing of anesthesiologist assistants as set out in House Bill 503 and Senate Bill 394, the response to the Committee's questionnaire (Attachment), and testimony before the Committee on April 25, 2005.

ATTACHMENT

*Response to Questionnaire for the
Legislative Committee on New Licensing
Boards*