

Senator Bailey, Representative Gramlich, and Members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services:

My name is Alyson Maloy and I am a practicing neurologist and psychiatrist in Maine. I am presenting testimony on behalf of nineteen Maine physicians from multiple specialties and multiple counties throughout the state who are asking this committee to reject L.D. 1166, An Act to Change the Professional Title and Identification of Physician Assistants to Physician Associates.

In March 2020, the Maine state legislature voted to allow physician assistants (PAs) to practice independently after 2 years of supervised work. Severing this mandatory professional association between physicians and PAs (following the very beginning of a PA's career) makes the terms 'physician assistant' and 'physician associate' both inappropriate in describing the job of PAs.

**The name 'physician associate' suggests to patients a link between a PA and a physician that no longer exists and is dishonest.** PAs relinquished their ties with physicians when they fought to attain 'optimum team practice' (OTP) and thus they do need their own title, like all groups of independent practitioners. For example, speech pathologists are not called 'physician associate speech pathologists.' Similarly, PAs need a name that does not perpetuate the now-defunct mandatory association between physicians and PAs. Should PAs want to keep the PA abbreviation, 'practitioner of allopathy' (suggested by a PA) would be more accurate.

(<https://www.statnews.com/2023/06/02/physician-assistants-associates-pas-new-name/>)

**Furthermore, the term 'associate physician' is already a professional title used for physicians who have not matched into residency.** More than 5,000 medical school graduates cannot match into residency every year due to the shortage of residency positions. These associate physicians possess either an MD or DO degree. Permitting both terms to be in use - associate physician and physician associate - is extremely confusing and unnecessary.

We ask that the committee NOT allow PAs in Maine to rename themselves 'physician associates.' The title they are proposing misrepresents the current medicolegal relationship between physicians and PAs and creates title confusion with associate physicians. PAs should find an accurate and distinct title to describe their new role that is separate from physicians.

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