ABOUT THE WAFP:

The Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians (WAFP) is a statewide association of Family Medicine doctors established in 1948 to:

1. Promote and maintain high professional and ethical standards in the practice of Family Medicine.
2. Encourage young people to prepare for active careers in Family Medicine.
3. Help provide continuing education to family physicians.

The WAFP – a chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians – represents over 2,900 members, making the WAFP the single largest physician specialty group in Wisconsin.

In addition, the Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians Foundation supports many of our educational and research programs for medical students, including those which would reduce the shortage of primary care physicians in Wisconsin.

WAFP MISSION:

The mission of the WAFP is to promote excellence in health care and to improve the health of the people of Wisconsin through the advancement of the art and science of Family Medicine, the specialty of Family Medicine and the professional growth of Family Physicians.

We also strive to increase access to quality health care in Wisconsin through legislative advocacy and work to support fair and meaningful legislation concerning health care issues in our state.

ABOUT FAMILY MEDICINE:

Family Medicine is the medical specialty that provides continuing and comprehensive primary health care for individuals and families. Family Medicine integrates the biological, clinical and behavioral sciences, and its scope encompasses all ages, both sexes, each organ system and every disease entity.

Family Medicine includes health promotion, disease prevention, health maintenance, counseling, patient education, diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic illnesses in a variety of health care settings.

Family physicians serve as the entry point for most of a patient's health care needs and more patients are seen by family doctors than any other specialty. Family physicians are advocates for patients in coordinating use of the entire health care system and are responsible for the patient's long-term care.
WAFP Opposes Elimination of Physician Assistant Supervision
Assembly Bill 575 and Senate Bill 515 Erodes Physician/PA Relationship

The Wisconsin Academy of Family Physicians (WAFP) greatly values our physician assistant colleagues. They are integral members of a physician-led caregiving team. However, WAFP is concerned that Assembly Bill 575/Senate Bill 515 poses health and safety concerns for Wisconsin’s patients and erodes the physician-led team-based health care that has routinely placed Wisconsin at the top of the list for quality of care. WAFP has a number of concerns with the bill:

1. Workforce Barrier Argument
   - According to the bill’s proponents, the legislation’s goal is to remove workforce barriers. That argument is a solution in search of a problem.
   - According to the Wisconsin Hospital Association’s 2019 Health Care Workforce Report, physician assistant employment in Wisconsin has increased 160% since 2009.
   - There remain unfilled vacancies for physician assistant positions around the state.

2. Increasing Access Argument
   - Despite the bill being called the “Collaboration and Rural Expansion of Services (CARES) Act” by its proponents, the bill does nothing to require or incentivize PAs to practice in rural or underserved areas.
   - There is a lack of data-driven evidence from other states that clearly shows this policy proposal increases access to care in rural and underserved areas.
   - The bill’s proponents have freely admitted, “It is not the intent of this bill to force or incentivize PAs to seek employment in only parts of the state.”

3. Eliminating Physician Supervision of Physician Assistants
   - Under current law, physicians are required to supervise physician assistants by coordinating, directing, and overseeing their work. The legislation eliminates this requirement.
   - Moving from a supervising relationship to a collaborative one is a fundamental shift, which ultimately compromises the standard of care for patients by eliminating the necessary supervision from a licensed physician.
   - Current supervision requirements allow physician assistant to practice to the fullest extent of their scope while still under the oversight and direction of a licensed physician.
   - Physicians traditionally undergo 4 years of medical education and 3 to 7 years of postgraduate residency training. In contrast, physician assistants receive just 27 months of combined education and training with no type of post-graduation residency training. This difference in preparedness is the primary reason for the supervisory relationship.
   - According to a 2018 American Medical Association (AMA) report on Physician Assistants, PA educational curriculum is “aimed at training a PA to work under the supervision of a practicing physician.”
   - According to The Journal of Physician Assistant Education, most PAs acquire clinical knowledge and training when they begin their job under a supervising physician.

4. Eliminating Medical Examining Board Regulatory Oversight of Physician Assistants
   - Physician assistants are currently licensed and regulated by the state Medical Examining Board, which also regulates physicians, anesthesiologist assistants, and perfusionists.
   - The legislation eliminates the Medical Examining Board’s regulatory oversight of physician assistants.
   - Instead, the bill creates a Physician Assistant Examining Board, which could allow physician assistants to create licensing and regulatory requirements without the input of physicians.
   - This could fundamentally and detrimentally change the way physicians and physician assistants practice together.

Please do not support Assembly Bill 575/Senate Bill 515. The legislation jeopardizes patient safety to solve a problem a workforce barrier issue that does not exist. If you have any questions, please contact WAFP’s lobbyist Tim Hoven (tim@hovenconsulting, 414-305-2011) or Erik Kanter (erik@hovenconsulting.com, 608-310-8833).