

HCS HB 497 -- PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

SPONSOR: Wasson (Sater)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing by a vote of 8 to 0.

This substitute expands the definition of "supervision" of physician assistants to allow supervising physicians to be available via telecommunications for consultation, assistance, or intervention. Supervising physicians must be present a minimum of 66% of the clinic's hours for practice supervision and collaboration when utilizing physician assistants, and physician assistants must practice within 30 miles of the supervising physician.

The Advisory Commission on Physician Assistants is authorized to create a waiver mechanism by which an individual physician and a physician assistant together may apply with the State Board of Registration for the Healing Arts for alternate amounts of on-site supervision. After receiving a waiver, the physician assistant will be allowed to conduct unsupervised practice up to 50 miles from the supervising physician in a designated health professional shortage area.

Prior to allowing a physician assistant to practice without the physician being physically present, the physician assistant will practice for one month with continuous physician supervision. After January 1, 2008, a physician assistant applicant must have a master's degree in a health or medical science related field.

The substitute also voids and makes it against public policy to require any physician to enter into any contract or other agreement to act as a supervising physician for any physician assistant. A physician has the right to refuse to act as a supervising physician, and no contract will limit the supervising physician's ultimate authority over any protocols or standing orders.

Except in a hospital setting, a physician cannot supervise more than three full-time physician assistants.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill increases access to care and is not an attempt to set up independent practices. Missouri is the only state that has no onsite percentage supervision requirements. If the bill is not passed this year, many services in rural health clinics will be reduced or

completely eliminated.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Sater; Missouri Association of Physician Assistants; Paul Winter, Missouri Academy of Physician Assistants; Andrew Johnson; Floyd Northington, D.O.; Toby Bisges; Missouri Hospital Association; and Missouri Farm Bureau.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that it will not increase access to care, but is an attempt for physician assistants to increase their scope of practice and establish independent practices. The proposed 55% of supervision is difficult to quantify, and a more rounded percentage of 80% would work better.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri State Medical Association; Missouri Academy of Family Physicians; and Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons.