



## **NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF NURSE ANESTHETISTS**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF NURSE ANESTHETISTS ON REDUCING OPIOID DEPENDENCY IN NEW YORK**

Senators Harckham, Rivera and Carlucci and other members of the Joint Senate Task Force on Opioids, Addiction and Overdose Prevention, I want to thank you for this opportunity to submit this statement, and have it added to the record for hearings you have held around the state, which hear from stakeholders on strategies for reducing overdoses, improving individual and community health and address the harmful consequences of drug use.

My name is Stephanie Grolemond, and I am the President of the New York State Association of Nurse Anesthetists (NYSANA). NYSANA is the state association that represents over 1,600 nurse anesthetists and student nurse anesthetists in New York. Nurse anesthetists are anesthesia professionals who safely administer more than 45 million anesthetics to patients each year in the United States. We are the primary providers of anesthesia care in rural America, providing over 90% of said services, enabling healthcare facilities in these medically underserved areas to offer obstetrical, surgical, pain management and trauma stabilization services. Nurse anesthetists provide anesthesia in collaboration with surgeons, anesthesiologists, dentists, podiatrists and other qualified healthcare professionals. When anesthesia is administered by a nurse anesthetist, it is recognized as the practice of nursing.

NYSANA has been actively engaged in efforts to combat the opioid crisis. In November 2018, we held a forum to discuss the crisis and what role the healthcare community has in stemming the crisis. The forum featured renowned infectious disease expert Dr. Amesh Adalja, senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, and examined the role that nurse anesthetists, and the healthcare community as a whole, have in making strides in combating opioid addiction and helping to change the landscape of pain management in New York state's hospitals and clinics to protect patients from the potential deadly effects of opioid misuse.

NYSANA has also been actively involved in efforts to provide opioid free anesthesia (OFA). Last year, we partnered with the Society for Opioid Free Anesthesia (SOFA) to help educate nurse anesthetists in New York on the benefits of OFA. OFA is a new technique that replaces opioids from the intra-operative portion of the anesthetic with safer medications that do a better job of managing surgical pain. By replacing opioids with these other medications, nurse anesthetists can reduce the patient's exposure to opioids, the amount of acute pain after surgery and the risk that lingering pain turns into a chronic pain condition.

It is the goal of NYSANA to work with our members to reduce a patient's need for opioids during the perioperative period in the first instance. As I am sure you have heard over these months of testimony, the more access a patient has to opioids, the greater the risk of dependency or addiction. SOFA has found when anesthesia providers utilize OFA, they are able to reduce total opioid use by 90-95% while at the same time reducing the amount of pain experienced by



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the patient. This benefit not only extends into the immediate post-operative period, but through the entire recovery period, allowing surgeons to drastically reduce the number of opioids they prescribe after surgery, and thereby reducing the number of opioids in the community.

NYSANA is committed to doing our part to address the opioid epidemic, and we believe that we could play an even stronger role if our scope of practice in New York was clearly defined under the state education law. Nationally, we are recognized as prescribers of medication assisted treatments (MATs), which helps those addicted to opioids. However, in New York, this is not something that we can provide because of our current lack of a defined scope of practice. We are now pursuing legislation to address this and look forward to increasing our role in battling this epidemic.

We thank you for holding these hearings on such an important topic. Please let us know if we can be a resource in the future and if you have other thoughts or ideas of what we could do to help to address this crisis.