

Dear Governor Ducey,

On Monday we became aware of your letter to Seema Verma of the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, exempting the state of Arizona from the regulation requiring Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists be supervised by a physician. This has been an ongoing hot topic studied and discussed for many years, so we were extremely disappointed that you unilaterally passed this executive order of exemption in a time of crisis.

Right now there is no increased demand for nurse anesthetists. Per your mandate, all elective surgeries have been cancelled. Our operating rooms are empty. Even with the anticipated spike in cases in Arizona, the demand will not be for people to provide anesthesia; it will be for people who know how to manage and adjust ventilators as well as care for critically ill patients — something we, as physician anesthesiologists, are much more prepared to do than is a nurse anesthetist. This executive order of exemption grants nurses the right to practice medicine the same way a physician practices medicine, while skipping thousands of hours of education and training critical to safe and effective patient care. Physician anesthesiologists receive a full medical education of four years, followed by an additional 4-5 years of residency training where they complete 12,000 - 16,000 hours of intense clinical training (compared with nurse anesthetists who complete an average of 2,000 hours). **These years of training prepare anesthesia doctors to manage complex and chronic medical conditions and to determine the root cause of complications before, during, after anesthesia.** Your decision directly places the care of our seniors -- many of whom will be at a very vulnerable point in their lives -- into the hands of people who are less equipped to treat them.

Perhaps you are convinced that nurse anesthetists will play a role in helping our state get through COVID-19 — if that is the case, then why not specify a certain period of time that this exemption would be valid? Governor Cuomo did something similar in New York, but his was a temporary measure that expires on April 22. Your decision, however, was permanent. Physician led anesthesia is the safest and best form of anesthesia care, and the COVID-19 crisis should not lead to a permanent change in that practice. In your letter, you also mentioned that this exemption would enhance access to care in our rural areas, yet made no attempt to restrict this provision to these areas.

We respectfully ask that you reconsider this executive order of exemption as written. This is not a time for hurried decisions. This is a drastic change that we believe will affect the quality of patient care and safety in the immediate future as well as far beyond the next few months.

Sincerely,

Chandler Anesthesia Consultants

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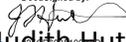
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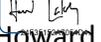
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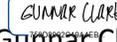
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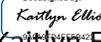
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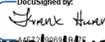
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