January 15, 2016

Dear Mr. Katz and Ms. Curtis:

We write today on behalf of the NCCPA Board of Directors in response to your letter of January 11.

NCCPA is considering evolving the recertification process to reflect the competencies of PAs practicing across the broad range of specialties, to improve the relevance of the examination and the impact of the experience as an opportunity not only to demonstrate knowledge but to foster a continuum of life-long learning. To inform our goals NCCPA is actively engaged in the solicitation of input and comments from a variety of stakeholders, including certified PAs themselves. As we announced in November, we will conduct a profession-wide survey throughout the month of February, inviting all certified PAs to provide meaningful feedback on all aspects of this model. As we have demonstrated throughout the development of this model -- which was informed by two other profession-wide surveys and multiple meetings with groups of PAs -- we are committed to providing every certified PA opportunity to inform our thinking about the current and future state of the recertification process.

We also have solicited and hope to receive input from AAPA and its many constituent organizations. Given the nature and breadth of feedback we desire, it may be most informative to receive unfiltered input directly from the 91 PA organizations represented in your House of Delegates. That said, our February Board meeting agenda already includes a review of our data gathering and decision-making timeline, and we will consider your request for an extension of the public comment period (currently scheduled to conclude on March 31) at that time.

As we trust you are aware, we have been communicating with AAPA staff leadership since November, eager to establish dialogue between our two boards to explain the model under consideration and respond to your questions about it. We look forward to the January 19 conference call scheduled earlier this week. Since we first announced this exploratory process in November, we have made clear our intent and strategies to ensure that your board, all certified PAs and our many other stakeholders are sufficiently informed about this model and the current state of PA practice to thoughtfully respond to it.
As articulated in the white paper we published last month, we believe the recertification exam model under consideration accomplishes the following important aims:

- Preserves the generalist nature of PA certification and the flexibility that it facilitates;
- Increases the degree to which PAs are assessed on content relevant to their current practice (with the opportunity to choose for themselves which of the specialty-focused exams best fit their experience and/or career plan);
- Maintains an assessment process on which the public, state medical boards and other stakeholders can rely as a valid measure of knowledge and clinical reasoning skills;
- Promotes ongoing learning and knowledge retention;
- Encourages the consultation of resources on content outside of the PA’s current area of practice, which better reflects how that is done in practice; and
- For a large percentage of PAs, reduces the time and cost of preparing for a timed, proctored exam that for many covers content beyond their current scope of practice.

Your desire for the House of Delegates to debate this issue from a policy standpoint notwithstanding, we explicitly encourage your professional staff to provide us any relevant data that would inform our discussions of this model, particularly as it relates to any concerns AAPA as an organization has about these potential changes.

As we know you appreciate, this is an important issue. Ultimately, we will weigh what we know about the current clinical practice of certified PAs and review the input received throughout this public comment period, as we aim to fulfill our obligations as an effective and responsible certifying body.

Sincerely,

Denni Woodmansee, MS, PA-C   Dawn Morton-Rias, Ed.D, PA-C
NCCPA Board Chair     NCCPA President/CEO

CC: Jenna Dorn, MPA, AAPA CEO
NCCPA Board of Directors
AAPA Board of Directors
Constituent organization leaders