

October 15, 2015

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

On behalf of the 35 undersigned organizations, we are pleased to express our support for the “Veterans Health Care Staffing Improvement Act” and to urge its enactment. We support the “Veterans Health Care Staffing Improvement Act,” because it recognizes all Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) as full practice authority providers and provides a common-sense solution to the challenges associated with ensuring America’s Veterans have access to the high-quality healthcare they need and deserve.

By recognizing Nurse Practitioners, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, Clinical Nurse Specialists, and Certified Nurse-Midwives to their full practice authority, the VHA will make optimal use of these critical members of the healthcare workforce across the entire care continuum. Many of the APRNs practicing in the VHA are also Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces, providing them with a unique clinical perspective. This legislation will allow the VHA to maximize care delivery and minimize waits and delays for critical services. The bill is also consistent with recommendations from the Independent Assessment of VHA healthcare delivery prepared by the RAND Corporation pursuant to the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (Choice Act), recommendations from the Institute of Medicine report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing *APRN Consensus Model*, and proposals under consideration in the VHA and Congress.

Most importantly for our Veterans, VHA recognition of APRN full practice authority would make VHA healthcare delivery consistent with the models already practiced by our U.S. Armed Forces, Indian Health Service and Public Health Service systems. In these federal health systems, our Veterans can already use their VHA health benefits thanks to the Choice Act. We also applaud your efforts to encourage recruitment of Veterans, and to create uniform credentialing standards for healthcare providers in the VHA.

In the interest of the Veterans for whom thousands of our members provide care within our VHA system, we thank you for introducing this legislation and look forward to helping enact it into law. Our members provide invaluable care within the VHA system for thousands of Veterans; this legislation will ensure the most efficient and effective use of these healthcare professionals so Veterans receive timely access to the high quality care they deserve. Please direct any questions to Frank Purcell, American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Senior Director Federal Government Affairs, at fpurcell@aanadc.com, 202-741-9080.

Sincerely,

Academy of Medical Surgical Nurses (AMSN)

American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN)

American Academy of Nursing (AAN)

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)

American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN)

American Association of Neuroscience Nurses (AANN)

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA)

American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP)

American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM)

American Nurses Association (ANA)

American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE)

American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association (APSNA)

American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA)

American Society of Perianesthesia Nurses (ASPAN)

Association of Community Health Nursing Educators (ACHNE)

Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC)

Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN)

Association of Public Health Nurses (APHN)

Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nurses (ARIN)

Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN)

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)

Emergency Nurses Association (ENA)

Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association (GAPNA)

International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses (ISPN)

National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists (NACNS)

National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health (NPWH)

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP)

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)

National Gerontological Nursing Association (NGNA)

National Hispanic Nurses Association (NAHN)

National League for Nursing (NLN)

National Nursing Centers Consortium (NNCC)

National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF)

Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA)

Organization for Associate Degree Nursing (OADN)