Improving Access to Care: One Home at a Time

Please Co-Sponsor the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2015 (H.R. 1342, S. 578)

The Growing Demand Services
Covering approximately 50 million individuals, Medicare plays a critical role in providing access to healthcare services for seniors and people with disabilities. In 2011, the oldest cohort of the Baby Boomer population—nearly 80 million Americans—turned 65. Approximately 10,000 Baby Boomers will reach age 65 each day until 2030.2 In addition, “…among people age 65, two-thirds are projected to need some long-term services and supports during their lifetime” and many will require extensive services through nursing homes and home health care.3

These patients contribute to a rising influx of consumers needing quality nursing services. Additionally, within the Medicare population are approximately eight million (or 17% of beneficiaries) nonelderly individuals with disabilities.4 These Americans are “…more likely than the elderly to live in poverty, to be in poor health, and to experience difficulties living independently and performing basic daily tasks.”5 Ensuring access to quality care for Medicare populations is critical, and it cannot be achieved without maximizing all healthcare providers. To do so, it is essential that providers—in particular nurses—are able to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

The Role of APRNs
Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) provide cost-effective, high-quality care, and their full practice authority in numerous healthcare settings has been recognized by Medicare, as allowed by state law, for nearly 20 years. In particular, home health is one area where APRNs are relied upon for their expert clinical skills and are the providers who see the majority of home health patients. While Medicare law allows APRNs to conduct an initial face-to-face meeting for home health benefits, Medicare law prohibits APRNs from signing home health plans of care and from certifying Medicare patients for the home health benefit. This restriction causes patient care to be delayed and can place undue burden on patients and their families. Furthermore, this restriction can result in increased costs to the Medicare system as patients discharged without proper home care are readmitted to care settings or left unnecessarily in more expensive assisted care settings.

The Solution
The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2015 would specifically allow certain APRNs (nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives, and clinical nurse specialists) and physician assistants to certify home health services, thus helping to ensure that our nation’s seniors and patients with disabilities receive services in a timely manner. This legislation clearly recognizes the critical contributions that APRNs make to the
delivery of health care in the United States and the need for these clinicians to practice to the full scope of their education and training. This directly aligns with years of empirical research and analysis, including recommendations from the Institute of Medicine’s 2010 landmark report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health.*

**Legislative History**

The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act has gained momentous bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate. This reflects a commitment among federal legislators to ensuring the timely delivery of quality services to patients across the nation. In the 113th Congress, the legislation had 24 Senate cosponsors and 162 House cosponsors.

S. 578 was introduced in the Senate on February 26, 2015 by Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Charles Schumer (D-NY), and has the support of 2 additional cosponsors. The House companion bill H.R. 1342 was introduced on March 6, 2015 by Representative Greg Walden (R-OR), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Mike Kelly (R-PA), Patrick Tiberi (R-OH), Todd Young (R-IN), Lynn Jenkins (R-KS), Ron Kind (D-WI), Mike Thompson (D-CA), Danny Davis (D-IL), Gregg Harper (R-MS), David McKinley (R-WV), Bill Johnson (R-OH), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), Peter Welch (D-VT), Lois Capps (D-CA), and Kurt Schrader (D-OR).

**National Support for H.R. 1342 and S. 578**

This legislation is supported by a broad range of national stakeholders, including:

- **AARP**
- **AFT Nurses and Health Professionals**
- **AMDA- The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine**
- **Alzheimer’s Foundation of America**
- **American Academy of Nursing**
- **American Association of Heart Failure Executives**
- **American Association of Colleges of Nursing**
- **American Association of Long-Term Care Medicine**
- **American Association of Mental Health Nurses**
- **American Association of Retired Persons**
- **American Association of School Nurses**
- **American Association of University Professors**
- **American College of Nurse-Midwives**
- **American Geriatrics Society**
- **American Nephrology Nurses’ Association**
- **American Nurses Association**
- **American Organization of Nurse Executives**
- **American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association**
- **American Psychiatric Nurses Association**
- **Association of Community Health Nursing Educators**
- **Association of Public Health Nurses**
- **Association of Rehabilitation Nurses**
- **Center for Medicare Advocacy**
- **Gerontological Advance Practice Nurses Association**
- **International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses**
- **The Jewish Federations of North America – Justice in Aging**
- **Leading Age**
- **Medicare Rights Center**
- **National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys**
- **National Association for Home Care & Hospice**
- **National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists**
- **National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners**
- **National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners**
- **National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers**
- **National Black Nurses Association**
- **National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare**
- **National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care**
- **National Council on Aging**
- **National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties**
- **Organization for Associate Degree Nursing**
- **OWL – The Voice of Women 40+**
- **Public Health Nursing Section, American Public Health Association**
- **VNAA – The Visiting Nurse Associations of America**
- **Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement**

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