



March 8, 2016

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

Dear Senator Merkley:

On behalf of the 46 undersigned organizations, the Nursing Community coalition writes in support of the Veterans Health Care Staffing Improvement Act (S. 2279). We support the Veterans Health Care Staffing Improvement Act as it would recognize Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) serving in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) as full practice providers, and thus would help ensure America's Veterans have access to the high-quality health care they need and deserve. Collectively, the Nursing Community coalition represents over one million registered nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, nurse executives, nursing students, nursing faculty, and nurse researchers. Our organizations are committed to improving the health and health care of our nation by collaborating to support advancements in nursing education and practice. This legislation is timely and critical as the VHA considers granting APRNs full practice authority.

By recognizing APRNs (which includes 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
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing
American Academy of Nursing
American Assembly for Men in Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Heart Failure Nurses
American Association of Neuroscience Nurses
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Association of Occupational Health Nurses
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Nephrology Nurses' Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Society of Perianesthesia Nurses
Association for Radiologic and Imaging Nurses
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of Public Health Nurses
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Association of Veterans Affairs Nurse Anesthetists
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Dermatology Nurses Association
Emergency Nurses Association
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Association of Neonatal Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Neonatal Nurses
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National Gerontological Nursing Association
National Hispanic Nurses Association
National League for Nursing
National Nursing Centers Consortium
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties

Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs
Oncology Nursing Society
Organization for Associate Degree Nursing