May 28, 2019

Honorable Cindy F. Friedman, Senate Chair  
Honorable Jennifer Benson, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing  
State House  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Re: Senate Bill No. 701/ House Bill No. 2664, An Act Relative to the Governance of the Health Policy Commission

Dear Chairs Friedman and Benson:

On behalf of the members of the American Nurses Association Massachusetts, thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of S. 701/H. 2664: An Act Relative to the Governance of the Health Policy Commission. I am pleased to convey to you and your committee our strong support for passage of this legislation. ANA Massachusetts is the constituent organization of the American Nurses Association, the voice of 4 million registered nurses across the nation. ANAMASS is the largest voluntary organization representing professional nurses from the bedside to the board room in the Commonwealth; we are committed to the advancement of the profession of nursing and of quality patient care across the Commonwealth.

Senate Bill No. 701/ House Bill No. 2664, An Act Relative to the Governance of the Health Policy Commission mandates that “a registered nurse licensed to practice in Massachusetts” be appointed to the Health Policy Commission, and further mandates that of those members appointed by the Governor, that “one shall have an advanced degree in public health who has expertise in implementing strategies to eliminate health care disparities.”

The Health Policy Commission is charged with monitoring healthcare spending growth and making policy recommendations for payment and system reform. It is time for the legislature to recognize the need to include the expertise of the largest member of the health care workforce at the table. With 4 million Registered Nurses in the United States, 130,0481 of whom are licensed in Massachusetts, nurses are the largest segment of healthcare professionals. Nurses bring a distinct and unique perspective to the healthcare cost and quality discussion. As a profession that practices in every healthcare delivery setting, and with every population, nurses offer expert knowledge on the continuum of healthcare delivery, quality, and system reform.

Since its inception, the Health Policy Commission has been dealing with highly charged and complex issues that affect the practice of nursing, such as prescription drug cost and behavioral health care treatment access. One of the most significant issues was the recent analysis of the potential financial...
impact and effect on workforce supply & demand of the proposed rapid implementation via ballot initiative of the strictest mandatory staffing ratios nationwide.

The absence of a Registered Nurse on the Commission prevents the HPC from benefitting from nursing’s expertise and making fully-informed decisions, and we acknowledge the foresight of State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump’s appointment of Barbara Blakeney, MSN, RN to the seat for development and utilization of innovative medical technologies and treatments for patient care. This appointment did not, however, eliminate the need for a permanent seat for a RN on the Commission. Nursing practice is data-driven and evidence based. Individual-level patient care decisions, as well as community-health level decisions are tempered by our professional judgement. Nurses are prepared both educationally and experientially to engage in policy leadership and innovative programs, consistent with the HPC’s mission to advance a more transparent, accountable, and innovative health care system.

Nursing’s clinical body of knowledge is focused on caring for people and communities so that they operate daily at their highest level of functioning. That focus is what contributes to successful recovery from an intervention, successful management of an ongoing condition, and to the health status of the overall population, which is the goal of successful healthcare. Success in these areas can lower costs and improve the quality of life for all. A permanent seat for a registered nurse on the Health Policy Commission will assure that the voice of not only the largest, but the most trusted health care profession is heard and ensures the health of all of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

A registered nurse on the Health Policy Commission would be an invaluable asset to its work. We respectfully urge you to recommend passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

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