June 12, 2023

Joint Committee on Elder Affairs
Senator Patricia D. Jehlen, Chair
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Representative Thomas M. Stanley, Chair
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Re HB2144-An Act to promote team-based health care

Dear Chair Cyr, Chair Decker, and members of the Joint Committee on Public Health

The American Nurses Association in Massachusetts (ANAMASS) is the largest voluntary professional organization for all nurses in the Commonwealth, including thousands of nurse practitioners (NPs). ANAMASS opposes H2144-An Act to promote team-based health care. Since the first pediatric NPs were trained in 1965, the numbers of NP specialties as well as numbers of advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) have increased, providing vital services to patients in underserved areas.¹

H2144 presents a threat to safe, effective, timely, patient-centered, efficient, and equitable care for the citizens of Massachusetts.

Since 1996 NPs have been recognized under law as primary care providers (PCPs). This follows a long history of excellent care provided to patients in historically underserved communities. Full Practice Authority was codified into Massachusetts law in 2021, allowing eligible NPs to evaluate patients, diagnose, order, and interpret diagnostic tests, initiate and manage treatments, including prescribing medications, without a supervising physician. Independent practice authority withdrew the need for an NP to collaborate with a specific physician after a 2-year period for new NPs who must work with a supervising clinician. This bill is an attempt to again place limits on NP independent practice and would decrease access to necessary care for the citizens of the Commonwealth.

This bill would require NPs “to practice within a health care system”. This would eliminate any NPs who practice in primary care settings that are not part of a “health care system”, including psychiatric mental health and primary care; physicians and other health care professionals are not required to limit their practice to be “within a health care system.” This bill places unnecessary
restrictions on NP practice and may decrease the number of NPs available to
deliver care and make it even more difficult for the citizens of the
Commonwealth to access necessary care. Meanwhile,

“the share of people who said they had difficulty accessing necessary
health care grew to 33.9 percent in 2021, from 32.4 percent in 2019, and
rates of avoidable emergency department use grew as well.
Those who identify as Black or Hispanic reported the most difficulty
accessing primary care. In 2021, only 64 percent of Hispanic residents, 70.3
percent of Black residents, and 73.7 percent of Asian residents reported
that they had a preventive care visit in the last 12 months, compared with
81 percent of white residents. Patient advocacy groups say the situation
has become so dire in immigrant communities that some children have
been unable to attend school or day care because they couldn’t get
their annual physicals and vaccinations.”2

In 2010 the Institute of Medicine released a landmark report on the future of
nursing, including the recommendations that nurses should:
1. Practice to the full extent of their education, training, and licensure
2. Be full partners with physicians and other health professionals.3

NP education and training has always included working in a team of health
care professionals. A mandate to work specifically with only physicians in the
same health care system makes it more challenging and creates barriers to
providing the best care to patients who often present with a variety of health
issues/needs that span across the health care continuum. There is no statute
that limits physician practice to a single system so that an individual physician
may only work with other physicians within that system, because it is best
practice to collaborate with providers with the needed expertise for a situation,
regardless of specialty.

In addition, Massachusetts must not return to antiquated and unjust practices,
which this bill would encourage, such as requiring NPs to purchase physician
services for supervision or collaboration. ANAMASS, on behalf of all registered
nurses in the Commonwealth, implores the Joint Commission on Elder Affairs to
oppose H2144.

On behalf of all the registered nurses in the Commonwealth serving the needs of
the citizens of Massachusetts in all care settings from the acute care setting to
the community, ANAMASS thanks you for your time and attention in addressing
the critical shortage of providers and preventing the return to laws that
purposely place barriers that make it tougher for citizens to access needed
health care.
Please reach out if you have any questions.

With Regards,

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