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For more information, please contact:

Katherine Wise, Texas Nurse Practitioners
katherine@castlecommunications.com

Kanaka Sathasivan, Texas Nurses Association
ksathasivan@texasnurses.org

Statement From Nursing Groups on the 87th Legislative Session

Texas faces the second worst nursing shortage in the country and ranks 51st nationally in health care access and affordability. After one of the most harrowing years in modern health care history, nurses across Texas were exceedingly hopeful that lawmakers would prioritize health care and pass policies and reforms to support patients, support nurses and improve our working conditions. Instead, the 87th Legislative Session proved a staggering disappointment.

After a year spent frequently and emphatically extolling the importance of nurses on the front lines of the pandemic, lawmakers failed to address urgent issues that have made it harder for nurses to provide care and for Texans to access care.

The past year of historic highs in nursing shortages demonstrated a dire need to expand the health care workforce. However, lawmakers cut the budget for the Nursing Shortage Reduction Program, allotted biennially to schools of nursing to increase enrollment. In addition, lawmakers refused to make permanent some of the waivers that made it easier for nurses to practice during the pandemic, further exacerbating the shortage.

Legislators also neglected to pass bills that would have helped protect nurses from workplace violence. In addition, Texas has now fallen even further behind most other states after lawmakers declined to increase our state's competitiveness for top primary care talent by removing outdated mandates on advanced practice registered nurses.

The last year taught us both the critical importance of nurses and nursing care in our state and the overwhelming degree of dedication our nurses commit to the patients who need them. While several lawmakers worked hard on behalf of Texas patients and nurses, we are deeply disheartened by the lack of progress this legislative session.

The 87th Legislature left unpassed a great deal of important legislation that would have eased the state's health care workforce shortage, improved working conditions for nurses, and resulted in more health care access for all Texans. In addition to budget cuts, the following bills and measures did not pass:

- HB 2029 (Klick), SB 915 (Hancock) — Would have removed anti-competitive regulations for APRNs to expand access to care for Texans.
- HB 1524 (Lucio) — Would have allowed APRNs to prescribe Schedule II medications under delegated authority from a physician.
- HB 326 (Howard) — Would have required facilities to adopt workplace violence prevention plans, encouraged reporting of incidents of workplace violence, and ensured that providers receive the care they need after an incident.



- HB 396 (Moody), SB 433/499 (Zaffirini and Blanco) – Would have created a presumption that nurses who contracted COVID-19 did so in the scope of their employment.
- HB 2409 (Dean) – Would have codified the COVID-19 measure waiving CE requirements and reactivation fees for nurses who came out of retirement/reactivated their license during a disaster.
- HB 982 (Howard and Darby) — Would have created an expedited licensure process for APRNs who are licensed out of state.
- SB 146 (Powell), HB 2062 (Klick) — Would have created a loan repayment program for nurses who work in long-term care.
- HB 3819 (Klick and Powell) – Would have allowed school nurses to administer prescription asthma medicine to a student in emergency situations

We will continue to advocate for nurses and patients throughout any special sessions and during the interim.

Signed by the following Texas nursing organizations:

Texas Nurses Association
Texas Nurse Practitioners
Consortium of Texas Certified Nurse Midwives
Texas Clinical Nurse Specialists
Texas DNP
Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurses of Texas
Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurses of Austin
Texas Association of Deans & Directors of Professional Nursing Programs
Texas Emergency Nurses Association
Texas School Nurses Organization
Texas Organization for Nursing Leadership
Texas Organization of Associate Degree Nursing
Texas Organization of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Education
Texas Collaboration of periOperative Registered Nurses
Association of periOperative Registered Nurses of Greater Houston
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses - Texas
Houston Chapter Oncology Nursing Society

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