

February 25, 2015

The Honorable Susan Collins  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Collins and Senator Schumer:

Thank you for introducing the bipartisan Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2015. We, the undersigned groups, pledge our continued support of your efforts to obtain passage of this important legislation in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress. As you know, the bill authorizes nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse-midwives and physician assistants as eligible health care professionals who can certify patient eligibility for home health care services under Medicare. This critical change would improve access to important home health care services, and potentially prevent additional hospital, sub-acute care facility and nursing home admissions—all of which are costly to the consumer, the taxpayer and Medicare.

The undersigned organizations are committed to ensuring that consumers have access to health care providers who are qualified, educated, and certified to provide high quality primary care, chronic care management, and other services that keep them living a high quality life, with dignity, in locations of their choice.

Although current law has long recognized advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants as authorized Medicare providers, and allows these clinicians to certify eligibility for nursing home care for their patients, it precludes these same practitioners from certifying patient eligibility for home health care services. This is an unnecessary barrier to care and adds at least one more step in the process of accessing home health care services by requiring the provider to find a physician to certify eligibility. In addition, time delays to locate a physician to certify eligibility, particularly in rural and underserved areas, can result in an extended hospital stay or nursing home admission because the beneficiary could not be moved back to or remain at home without home health care services.

There are decades of data supporting the ability of these providers to deliver high quality care to people of all ages, including Medicare recipients with multiple chronic conditions. Advanced practice registered nurses are often the only care providers available in health professional shortage areas such as urban, rural, and frontier regions. Given the existing and future projected primary care physician shortages, and the coming of increased numbers of Medicare eligible patients, the need will be even greater for all qualified providers to be allowed to certify home health care eligibility.

The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act would help to ensure that Medicare beneficiaries in need of home health care services whose providers are nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse midwives, and physician assistants would be able to directly access home health care by referral from their providers. This bill would provide beneficiaries continued access to care and increase the likelihood that they would experience better health and a higher quality of life. Additionally, outside experts assessed the impact of the bill earlier last year and projected a Medicare savings of \$7.1 million in 2015 and up to a ten-year savings of \$252.6 million.<sup>1</sup> This analysis also notes the potential to reduce beneficiary admissions to and lengths of stay in institutional settings under the policy change.

We appreciate your continued leadership and are committed to working with you to ensure that this bipartisan legislation is passed and placed on the President's desk for signature at the first opportunity. The time is now to ensure that patients have timely access to the quality, cost effective care they need. For any questions, please contact [governmentaffairs@aanp.org](mailto:governmentaffairs@aanp.org) or 703-740-2529.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

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 Academy of Physician Assistants

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Heart Failure Nurses

American Association of Nurse Practitioners

American Association of Occupational Health Nurses

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American Geriatrics Society

American Nephrology Nurses' Association

American Nurses Association

American Organization of Nurse Executives

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<sup>1</sup>Dobson DaVanzo & Associates, LLC, "Updated Report: Impact of The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act (H.R. 2504; S. 1332) on Medicare Expenditures," March 25, 2014.

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 Nurses  
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

cc:The Honorable Harry Reid  
The Honorable Richard Durbin  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
The Honorable John Cornyn  
The Honorable John Thune  
Senate Finance Committee members