

December 4, 2014

The Honorable Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Greg Walden
2182 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Allyson Schwartz
1227 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Collins, Senator Schumer, Representative Walden and Representative Schwartz:

Thank you for championing the bipartisan Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act (H. R. 2504/S.1332) legislation. We, the undersigned groups, pledge our continued support of your efforts to obtain passage before the end of the year. 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 this year and projected a Medicare savings of \$7.1 million in 2015 and up to a ten-year savings of \$252.6 million.¹ This analysis also notes the potential to reduce beneficiary admissions to and lengths of stay in institutional settings under the policy change.

It is important that this legislation pass and be placed on the President's desk for signature. 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 or 703-740-2529.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

AARP

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

Academy of Medical-Surgical Nurses
AFT Nurses and Health Professionals
Alzheimer's Foundation of America
AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine
American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nurses
American Academy of Home Care Medicine
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Physician Assistants
American Association of College of Nurses
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Heart Failure Nurses
American Association of Neuroscience Nurses
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Geriatrics Society
American Nephrology Nurses Association
American Nurses Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Society of PeriAnesthesia Nurses
Association for Radiologic & Imaging Nursing
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators
Association of Public Health Nurses
Association of Rehabilitation Nurses
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
Infusion Nurses Society
Jewish Federations of North America
Leading Age
Medicare Rights Center
National Association for Home Care & Hospice
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Association of Hispanic Nurses
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 Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care
National Council of State Boards of Nursing
National Council on Aging
National Gerontological Nurses Association
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
National Senior Citizens Law Center
Oncology Nursing Society
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
The Organization for Associate Degree Nursing
Visiting Nurse Associations of America
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)
Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nurses Society

cc:

The Honorable John Boehner
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Steven Scalise

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable James Clyburn
The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Richard Durbin

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable John Thune