

May 9, 2017

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

The Honorable Benjamin Cardin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Collins and Senator Cardin:

Thank you for introducing the bipartisan Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act of 2017 (S.445). We, the undersigned groups, pledge our continued support of your efforts to obtain passage of this important legislation in the 115th 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 remain 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 of 2017 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. S.445 would provide beneficiaries continued access to care and increase the likelihood that they would experience better health and a higher quality of life.

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 during this Congress. Now is the time 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

Aging Life Care Association

AMDA- The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine

Alzheimer's Foundation of America

American Academy of Home Care Medicine

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

Association of Public Health Nurses

Association of Rehabilitation Nurses

Center for Medicare Advocacy

Gerontological Advance Practice Nurses Association

The Jewish Federations of North America
LeadingAge
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 Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
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
OWL-The Voice of Women 40+
Physician Assistant Education Association
VNAA – The Visiting Nurse Associations of America
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable John Thune
The Honorable Chuck Schumer
The Honorable Richard Durbin
The Honorable Patty Murray
Senate Finance Committee members