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LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO CARE

JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI, January 24, 2012 - The Missouri Nurses Association is pleased to announce that HB1371 and SB 679 have been introduced in the Missouri legislature. This legislation will reduce barriers to practice for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) and is consistent with the Institute of Medicine report, The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health, recommendation that nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training. The recommendations offered in the report focus on the critical intersection between the health needs of diverse, changing patient populations across the lifespan and the actions of the nursing workforce. These recommendations are intended to support efforts to improve the health of the U.S. population through the contributions nurses can make to the delivery of care.

This legislation will allow Missouri’s nearly six million citizens to have accessible, high-quality healthcare provided by certified nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and certified clinical nurse specialists. The state of Missouri is rated in the bottom six in access to care by the Pearson Report and is rated 50 out of 51 according to the Ranking State NP Regulation: Practice Environment and Consumer Healthcare Choice Report. Current Missouri laws are hampering the ability of APRNs to contribute to innovative health care delivery solutions.

APRNs (nurse practitioners, clinical nurse midwives, certified nurse midwives, certified registered nurse anesthetists) are educated at the graduate level and studies show they deliver cost effective, high quality, and safe health care. Studies also show that the care provided by APRNs results in lower litigation rates and resultant lower malpractice rates. APRNs have been in existence for decades and have provided the bulk of care to our nation’s veterans. Statutory regulation of APRNs is highly variable from state to state. Seventeen states (including Iowa) have independent practice. Missouri is a rural state with 109 of 114 counties having health care provider shortage areas or medically underserved areas in them.

The recent Joplin tornado exposed the consequences of these barriers. APRNs beyond 50 miles of Joplin were not able to come and provide emergent care. The barriers of retrospective chart reviews, geographical distances, collaborative practice agreements, restrictions on prescribing needed pain medications, and a wide variety of other barriers have significant costs to the health care system and are often referred to as the hidden health care tax. Given the recent budget cuts to Medicaid in Missouri, APRNs will assist in the containment of health care costs. The Institute of Medicine, in its recent sentinel report: The Future of Nursing, recommended state legislatures reduce barriers to APRN practice and increase patient access to care. The Missouri legislature is to be commended on its attempts to reduce these barriers and increase access, availability, and utilization of the high quality, safe and cost effective care provided by APRNs.

Shanna DeWater, DNP candidate, FNP-BC, Veteran’s Administration Nurse Practitioner who delivers care to a panel of 1200 veterans, states “the removal of these restrictions will allow more comprehensive care to be delivered to Missouri patients. While physicians may consider this a turf battle, the discussions need to center on the restrictions that create hardships and impositions to Missouri patients. In the midst of this debate, Missouri scores poorly on most healthcare outcomes.” Mrs. DeWater goes on to say “my Veteran’s patients fall under Washington DC regulations which allow independent practice by an APRN and thus are not restricted.”

To ensure that all Missourians have access to needed health care services and that nurses’ unique contributions to the health care team are maximized, federal and state actions are required to update and standardize scope-of-practice regulations to take advantage of the full capacity and education of APRNs.

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Organized in 1906, MONA works to protect the interest of the 95,000 registered nurses in Missouri. MONA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and lobbying the legislature and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

One Strong Voice for Missourians Nurses

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