



February 3, 2016

Emily Bell
14 Scoter Cove
Safety Harbor, FL 34695

Dear Governor Scott,

Last year House Bill 335 regarding psychiatric nurses was passed and signed into law, taking effect July 1st 2015. This law altered the definition of a psychiatric nurse under the Mental Health Act, shifting licensure prerequisites from Registered Nurse (RN) to Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP) and added a requirement of Board Certification in Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing. During last session, many nursing organizations unsuccessfully attempted to quantify the number of “psychiatric nurses” in the state. They wanted to know how this change would impact nursing and our ability to provide care of Floridians.

As you may well know, Florida has a mental healthcare system crisis. We lack sufficient mental health beds in state, private and public hospitals. The mental health provider shortage has created wait lists for outpatient care. It is unknown how significant the psychiatric nursing shortage is, and it’s total impact to access & quality of care in Florida. Better knowledge of this workforce could lead to recommendations to improve our mental healthcare system.

The state of Florida has studied Registered Nurses and Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners through the Florida Center for Nursing. However, there has been no study of the psychiatric nursing workforce which includes RNs, ARNPs and Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNSs). A workforce study regarding psychiatric nurses could assist in determining how many “psychiatric nurses” are in the state and how we can better serve our fellow citizens.

As of today, there are only four Florida schools that offer a degree in Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing and there is a shortage of nursing professors able to teach in these programs. A workforce investigation should include an evaluation of Florida’s nursing schools ability to teach, train and develop psychiatric nurses.

The American Psychiatric Nurses Association’s Florida Chapter Board of Directors is recommending a psychiatric nursing workforce analysis to be performed by the Department of Children and Families in conjunction with the Florida Center for Nursing. Thank you for your time and consideration. Our chapter is ready, willing and able to provide expert knowledge requested by your office.

Sincerely,

Emily E. Bell RN, ARNP, PMHNP-BC
American Psychiatric Nurses Association, Florida Chapter
President
Emily.e.donelson@gmail.com
(646) 996-4328