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Public Health Committee

March 20, 2013

Testimony in Support of H.B. 6391

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED
NURSES

Submitted by Pat Gerckens, AARP Volunteer

Good morning, my name is Pat Gerckens. I am an AARP volunteer from Derby, CT. AARP is a membership organization of people 50 and older with nearly 600,000 members in Connecticut. We are pleased to testify in strong support of H.B. 6391. AARP is committed to championing access to affordable, high quality health care for all generations. That's why we support policy changes outlined in H.B. 6391 that allow advance practice registered nurses (APRNs) to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

House Bill 6391 would increase consumers' access to health care by supporting and allowing increased utilization of APRNs. The bill removes the written collaborative agreement currently required between physicians and APRNs. This mandatory supervision can often delay care to consumers, especially in underserved areas where there is a lack of available physicians with whom the nurse can collaborate. The change will also improve access for seniors on Medicare and Medicaid. Nationally, Eighty-seven percent (87%) of nurse practitioners see patients covered by Medicare and 84% by Medicaid.

Increasing consumers' access to care is supported by leaders in policy and science. A recent report from the National Governors Association, *The Role of Nurse Practitioners in Meeting Increasing Demand for Primary Care*, recommends that states consider easing their scope of practice restrictions on Nurse Practitioners, emphasizing their role in the growing demand for primary care. This recommendation supports the 2011 Institute of Medicine evidence-based report *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, which calls for changes at the state and federal levels to help increase consumers' access to care by enabling APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

Many of Connecticut's health care consumers get the following services from APRNs: assessment and diagnosis of conditions, prescriptions, and referrals to specialists. AARP Connecticut supports H.B. 6391 because it will improve consumers' access to care by reducing the wait time for such care. Accessing primary care in a timely manner increases consumers' quality of life and helps to contain their health care spending. Maryland passed a similar law to remove written collaboration in 2010, as did Colorado in 2009 and North Dakota in 2011.

Decades of evidence demonstrates that APRNs provide as high quality health care to consumers as do physicians. This high quality of care is evident whether or not APRNs are supervised by or are in a restrictive collaborative arrangement with physicians. Connecticut should ensure that consumers can access a primary care provider when and where they need one. This bill would improve such access to care. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.B. 6391. We urge you to consider and support the proposal.

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