

**April 3, 2013**

**To Members of the Public Health Committee**

**My name is Edward Volpintesta. I have been practicing primary care in Bethel for almost 40 years. I am submitting testimony in favor of HB 6391 allowing Advanced Training Practical Nurses (APRNs) to practice independently particularly in the area of primary care.**

**The role of primary care physicians has changed radically over the past few decades.**

**Today primary care physicians work mainly in the area of diagnosis and prevention; and coordination and maintenance of care. Many primary care doctors who in the early years of their careers had treated a wide variety of illnesses, now find that their days are filled mostly with uncomplicated respiratory illnesses, some bone and joint problems, depression, maintenance of diabetes, stable heart disease, and hypertension.**

**Many only maintain an office practice and no longer take care of hospital patients or nursing home patients.**

**This new paradigm of primary care makes it reasonable to assume that well-trained advanced practical registered nurses (APRNs) practicing independently could provide many facets of the care that primary care physicians are now doing.**

**Nurse practitioners practicing independently in primary care is not a new idea. According to the *Washington Post* (March 24) about 6000 nurse practitioners already have independent primary care practices. They can practice independently in 16 states and proposals are underway to expand that number to 30.**

**Since the American Medical Association reported recently that by 2020 the primary care physician shortage will be about 46,000 (*amednews.com*, January 13) and since it takes about 11 years to train a primary care doctor it is doubtful that enough physicians will be trained to reduce the shortage significantly by that time and since it is unlikely that APRNs and primary care physicians will overcome the professional differences that have divided them and blocked attempts at collaborative practices it seems that the time is right for APRNs to be given the opportunity to practice independently particularly in the area of primary care.**

**Edward Volpintesta MD**

**Bethel**