



Real Possibilities

Testimony of AARP Connecticut

S.B. # 36: AAC THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO
HEALTH CARE

February 28, 2014

Public Health Committee

Good afternoon, Members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Jill Heidel; I'm a retired RN; I am also an AARP advocacy volunteer from Bethel and served as AARP's representative on the Department of Public Health's scope of practice review committee.

AARP is a membership organization of people 50 and older with 603,000 members in Connecticut and is pleased to have the opportunity to provide our comments. We are committed to championing access to affordable, high quality health care for all generations, providing the tools needed to save for retirement, and serving as a reliable information source on issues critical to Americans age 50+. Thus, we strongly encourage you to support Senate Bill 36.

We support this bill because it will increase consumer access to health care and reduce unnecessary health care costs. It would do this by removing outdated barriers that prohibit advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) from providing care to consumers to the full extent of their education and training. These barriers often delay care to consumers, especially in rural and urban underserved areas where there is a lack of available physicians to supervise or collaborate with the APRN. And when care is delayed it not only hurts consumers, it also places added stress on family caregivers, who all too often are overwhelmed with bearing the brunt of providing and overseeing the care of a loved one. It can also add unnecessary costs by requiring payments to doctors for collaboration and take precious time away from patient care by making clinicians fill out unnecessary paperwork.

Reducing barriers to full APRN practice 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*, documents the clear and convincing evidence that exists for nurse practitioners which shows they provide high quality care with high patient satisfaction and recommends that states consider removing barriers to practice for 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 consumer access to care by enabling APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

An APRN is a nurse:

- Who has completed an accredited graduate-level education program;
- Who has passed a national certification examination;

- Who has acquired advanced clinical knowledge and skills preparing him/her to provide direct care to patients;
- Whose practice builds on the competencies of registered nurses (RNs) by demonstrating a greater depth and breadth of knowledge;
- Who is educationally prepared to assess, diagnose and manage a patient's health care, which includes the use and prescription of pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions; &
- Who has clinical experience of sufficient depth and knowledge.

Health care consumers and family caregivers rely on APRNs for assessing and diagnosing conditions, prescribing medications, and referring to specialists. AARP Connecticut supports Senate Bill 36 because it will improve access to care for consumers and caregivers 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.

Decades of evidence demonstrate that APRNs provide the same high quality of health care as physicians. This high quality of care is evident whether or not APRNs are supervised by physicians.

AARP Connecticut is deeply appreciative of the primary care and chronic care management provided by all clinicians. We need to be certain, however, that our members and all health care consumers can access a primary care provider when and where they need one. This bill would help ensure such access to care.

Thank you for your time and attention.