

GOVERNOR'S BILL No. 36 AAC THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

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Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and Members of the Committee:

I enthusiastically support the critical change in the nurse practice to remove the collaborative agreement requirement. This change is essential to improve patient access to health care, control the cost of health care and efficiently utilize of all types of health care providers available to us. With health care provider shortages and more than 45 million uninsured Americans, it becomes essential to look at all of our health care resources. APRNs are a vital part of the solution to CT and our country's healthcare challenges. Without APRNs, thousands of individuals in CT would not get health care.

Our community health center began in 1998 as a small service department of the local hospital with one Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) and a physician. Today we have grown to have a 2 physician and 8 APRNs providing quality cost effective health care to six thousand patients in northwestern CT. Our center provides quality health care and it has the lowest cost for care in the state. Prior to our services primary access to health care for the un/ under insured in Northwestern CT was in a Walk-In or Emergency Room setting. This health care was episodic and costly usually resulted in no major improvements in the individual's health.

In order to stay operating through the years it was critical that we considered all provider costs and issues to stay financially viable.

- The cost of hiring an APRN for us is 56% less than if we hired physicians.
- APRNs know how to care for 95-98% of what we see in primary care today. At our center, it is our APRNs that have the advanced knowledge to care for HIV/AIDS patients.
- Additionally APRNs at our center see as many and sometimes more patients than the physician.
- APRNs have the best training to support Patient Centered Medical Home requirements. The emphasis of education and self-care are core components of all nursing education.
- We have encountered difficulty maintaining MD collaboration through the years. Should our physicians decide to leave us, over 6,000 patients would be unable to get their health care due to the existing CT Statute that requires APRNs to have collaborative agreements.
- Our APRNs have a proven record of providing quality comprehensive health care. Additionally **as any professional**, APRNs, as any other professional, know when to seek collaboration regarding a patient's health care needs. For my most experienced APRNs it is usually a specialist that is needed.
- APRNs are independently responsible for their actions, regardless of whether physicians are involved.

- As a center that serves the underserved population, the need for more APRNs is critical and will continue to grow. APRNs work extremely well in our setting.
- As we move into person centered medical home, the skill set needed for these patients encompasses holistic care, understanding of psychosocial needs of the patients and the ability to educate & promote self-care behaviors. These abilities are the foundation of nursing education and training.

All health care providers need to work together, contributing our respective knowledge and expertise to meet the growing health care needs in our state and country. It is essential that the barriers of collaborative agreements be removed as we move toward health care as a right in CT and nationally.