



February 18, 2014

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
801 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

We are writing to support your continued commitment to provide high quality health care to the nation's 8.3 million veterans by affirming, in your proposed Nursing Handbook, that nurse practitioners are recognized as having full practice authority within the Veterans Affairs (VA) system. As you know, nurse practitioners have a long history of providing high quality, cost effective primary care to their patients. Not only are they skilled in diagnosing and treating the acute and chronic illnesses of all populations including veterans, but they are advocates and skilled in the areas of health promotion and disease prevention.

As you know, nurse practitioners are educationally prepared to function as licensed independent practitioners, which they are currently doing in many states and federal agencies. Where limitations occur, they are the result of obsolete laws that are in the process of being changed throughout the nation. Updating VA policies to reinforce that authorization is consistent with the general movement to remove barriers to nurse practitioner access and practice, and serves to enhance patient care.

The VA has been a clear leader in innovative health care delivery models in its many medical centers and community based outpatient clinics in the provision of timely, efficient, high quality care. By including the recognition of nurse practitioners as full practice health care providers in all its settings in its Nursing Handbook, the Veteran's Administration shows its commitment to quality health care for our veterans. By serving as full practice health care providers throughout the VA system, nurse practitioners will be able to provide care at the full scope of their educational preparation, and provide flexibility within the VA to provide optimal care and maximize resources.

We support you in these endeavors and applaud your insight to remove barriers to care for our veterans and thank you for your continued commitment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doreen Cassarino".

Dr. Doreen Cassarino, DNP, ARNP, FNP-BC, BC-ADM
Florida Nurse Practitioner Network, President

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