

## **Nurse practitioners unite, urge lawmakers to revamp health care laws**

*Nurses join business groups in call for accessible, affordable health care*

TALLAHASSEE – On the eve of the 2013 Florida Legislature, several nurse organizations are urging lawmakers to make changes in nurse practitioner laws that will address the growing demand for primary care services and practitioners.

The **Florida Nurses Association**, **Florida Association of Nurse Anesthetists**, **Florida Association of Nurse Practitioners** and the **Florida Nurse Practitioners Network** want lawmakers to modernize 40-year-old nurse practitioner laws to reflect changes coming under the Affordable Care Act, which will bring thousands of people into commercial and Medicaid health care plans.

“With a shortage of primary care physicians, nurse practitioners – with their experience and education – are ready and available to step in and provide patients with the basic health care services, without delay.” said FNA President Mavra Kear on behalf of the four organizations.

Specifically, the groups want lawmakers to update laws that prohibit advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNPs) from prescribing certain medications and to modify policies including reimbursement practices that will encourage commercial and Medicaid health plans to make nurse practitioners available for the growing number of enrollees.

The nurses are part of a growing chorus of other groups calling for changes in scope of practice laws:

- The **Associated Industries of Florida**, in its 2013 legislative recommendations, makes the following statement: “Florida cannot simply hire hundreds of physicians overnight... there is a plethora of trained, professional health care providers who are currently prohibited from delivering basic care that could be used if some regulatory, licensing barriers were removed.”
- In a summary of its ARNP Scope of Practice Summit in Tallahassee, **Florida TaxWatch** President and CEO Dominic Calabro says that stakeholders are ready to discuss the issue and have productive negotiations based on evidence-based reports, and focus on doing what is best for Floridians. “Now is the time to put aside historical disagreements among interest groups, and work together toward a healthier, efficient, and cost-effective Florida,” he states.
- A **National Governors Association** report in December urged states to “consider changing scope of practice restrictions and assuring adequate reimbursement for their services as a way of encouraging and incentivizing greater (ARNP) involvement in the provision of primary health care.”

“As lawmakers address comprehensive changes under the Affordable Care Act, we look forward to assisting them with the primary care challenges faced by our state,” said FNA Executive Director Willa Fuller. “It is vital that nurse practitioner laws are updated to reflect the role we play in this new age of health care.”

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