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HB 278 Health Occupations - Clinical Nurse Specialists - Prescribing Authority

FAVORABLE

House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 21, 2023

Good Afternoon Chair Peña-Melnyk and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan, Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. AARP MD has over 850,000 members in Maryland. AARP Maryland and its members supports **HB 278 Health Occupations - Clinical Nurse Specialists - Prescribing Authority**. AARP MD thanks Delegate Cullison for bringing this important legislation to the Maryland General Assembly.

HB 278 defines "clinical nurse specialist" and "practice as a clinical nurse specialist" for the purpose of authorizing clinical nurse specialists to prescribe drugs and durable medical equipment under regulations adopted by the State Board of Nursing. Further HB 278 alters the definition of "authorized prescriber" for purposes of the Maryland Pharmacy Act to include clinical nurse specialists; and authorizing a licensed physician to personally prepare and dispense a prescription written by a clinical nurse specialist.

Nurses do remarkable things for the people they serve. For many family caregivers, nurses are lifesavers, providing care for their older loved ones at home — often after a hospitalization or while treating a serious medical condition. They are one of the reasons many older Americans are able to continue to live at home, where they want to be — and not in costly institutions such as nursing homes.

Clinical nurses have completed additional education and training at the master's or doctoral level. This means they're qualified to diagnose and treat patients, order and evaluate diagnostic tests, prescribe medications and more. They should be able to practice to the full extent of their training.

Every American deserves a highly skilled nurse when and where nursing skills are needed. A richly skilled, effectively integrated nursing workforce — with enough professionals to meet the need — is essential to delivering high-quality health care.

AARP believes that high-quality, patient-centered health care for all will require remodeling many aspects of the health care system, especially nursing. Nurses should be able to practice to full extent of their education and training. State nurse practice should be amended to all Advance Practice Registered Nurse to fully and independently practice as defined by their education and certification.

These changes could mean for Older Marylanders:

- Less travel to medical offices for a family caregiver to organize, instead allowing a nurse practitioner to prescribe certain prescriptions at a patient's home.
- Removal of outdated barriers that prohibit nurse practitioners from providing care to their patients to the full extent of their education and training.
- Additional opportunities for patients to get routine health care in a variety of settings close to home, like medical offices, community health centers, in the workplace and at home.
- Medical or nursing tasks may be delegated to a trained home-care worker instead of falling on the family caregiver.

As part of our caregiving campaign, AARP has been working across the states to give nurses more authority to heal, and already, progress has been made. AARP members are watching for policy solutions and legislation that would fully realize nurses' potential contribution to a patient-centered, transformed health care system in the following areas:

- **Removing Barriers to Practice and Care:** Modernize outdated policies (public and private) and change state and federal laws and regulations to allow nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training.
- **Patient-Centered Transformed Health Care System:** Advances and contributions to the research, advocacy and communications strategies through the national network of professional and health care related stakeholders.

For these reasons AARP respectfully request a favorable report on HB 278. For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact me at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.