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March 15, 2024

The Honorable Dan Frankel
326 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202023
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2023

Dear Chairman Frankel:

The Pennsylvania State Nurses Association opposes Senate Bill 668.

It is PSNA's position that certified medication aides would not be adequately trained or qualified to administer medications to patients. Certified medication aides would be nurse aides who have met some additional requirements, but both types of aides would lack the education, skills, and judgment to ensure safe and effective medication administration. Allowing them to perform this task would compromise the quality of care and put patients at risk of medication errors, adverse reactions, and potential harm.

Certified nurse aides do indeed play a crucial role in many healthcare settings. Long term care facilities, for example, could not operate without nurse aides. However, even as certified medication aides, they should not be administering medications to patients. Nurse aides are required to have only a high school level education to maintain their role. By contrast, licensed practical nurses (LPN) and registered nurses (RN) complete advanced education to learn about these drugs and how they interact with chronic conditions and other medications.

Nurses also take a nationally recognized, psychometrically sound, and legally defensible certification exam (National Council Licensure Examination, or NCLEX) and hold licenses overseen by licensing boards. These boards give a level of accountability to the profession that does not exist with certified nurse aides and would not exist with certified medication aides. Without this accountability, the level of care and safety currently guaranteed to patients today would not exist. We should not be removing safeguards for patients. Medication aides would follow instructions and protocol without needing to understand the implication of the medication and its outcomes. These technicians are not equipped to handle emergencies or complications that may arise from the administration of medication.

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Medication administration is a critical and complex aspect of patient care that requires the expertise and supervision of an LPN or RN. Nurses have the education, experience, and accountability to assess, monitor, and evaluate patients' responses to medications. Nurses also have the authority and responsibility to intervene, adjust, or discontinue medications as needed.

The use of medication aides would endanger patients and undermine the professional standards and scope of practice of nurses.

I urge you to vote against Senate Bill 668 and to support safe, quality care of patients by ensuring that medication administration is performed only by licensed and qualified health care professionals.

Thank you for your attention and consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne E. Reich Jr." with a stylized, cursive script. The signature is written over a horizontal line that extends to the left and right.

Wayne E. Reich, Jr., MSN, MBA, RN
Chief Executive Officer



The Hospital + Healthsystem
Association of Pennsylvania

Leading for Better Health

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Dan Frankel
Chair, House Health Committee
The Pennsylvania House of Representatives
P.O. Box 202023
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2023

The Honorable Kathy L. Rapp
Minority Chair, House Health Committee
The Pennsylvania House of Representatives
P.O. Box 202065
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2065

Dear Chairman Frankel, Chairwoman Rapp, and Members of the House Health Committee:

On behalf of more than 230 members statewide, The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania (HAP) writes to support Senate Bill 668, PN 1180, as passed by the Pennsylvania Senate. Sponsored by Senator Judy Ward, this bill would add a position of 'Certified Medication Aide' to the Health Care Facilities Act.

SB 668 would—in limited instances and specific settings—allow Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) who work in skilled nursing settings to become Certified Medication Aides. The Pennsylvania Department of Health would establish medication aide training, which would include a minimum of eight hours of classroom instruction. Certification must be renewed every two years.

Pennsylvania, and the nation, is in a well-documented health care workforce crisis. The shortage is widespread and often felt most acutely in rural areas. A recent HAP report showed that the statewide average vacancy rate for nursing support staff is 19 percent. In rural Pennsylvania communities, the rate jumps to 28 percent. SB 668 is a small, yet meaningful, step to address the crisis.

Through Senate Bill 668, CNAs who complete the training could perform some medication administration duties, allowing licensed nurses to focus more on tasks that require their specific expertise. Expanding the pool of trained personnel enables health care providers to better meet patient needs. The bill would allow those CNAs to contribute more directly to patient care and can help alleviate the strain on other professionals, such as registered nurses or licensed practical nurses, who are in short supply.

HAP values initiatives that engage existing workers in education and training activities. We believe that strengthening health care career pathways, as this proposal does, empowers Pennsylvanians in their professional growth. Those who engage in career progression are more likely to remain in their fields, helping to reduce turnover and mitigate some effects of the workforce crisis.

On behalf of the hospital community, we respectfully ask that you please vote yes on Senate Bill 668. Thank you for all the ways you support your constituents' health and safety. We stand ready to assist you. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at HTyler@HAPonline.org or (717) 433-1997.

Sincerely,

Heather Tyler
Vice President, State Legislative Advocacy

c: The Honorable Judy Ward