

MICNP Testimony Senate Health Policy: Health Provider Shortage  
May 19, 2011

Good afternoon Chairman Merleau, and members of the committee. We are honored today to represent the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners (MICNP) and share how nurse practitioners are caring for the Michigan's citizens. We listened with interest to Ms. Anne Rosewarne presentation addressing the health provider shortage.

**Background**

As you may know, there are over 3,778 nurse practitioners in the state of Michigan with valid Registered Nursing licenses and specialty certification as nurse practitioners. Approximately 54% of the NPs in Michigan practice in primary care across the life-span and all genders. Michigan Council Of Nurse Practitioners, a non-profit organization that has brought together nurse practitioners striving to improve the health and primary care environment in Michigan. NPs currently are practicing in many different settings: rural health centers, school-based health centers, nurse-managed clinics, federally qualified health centers, community health centers and clinics for underinsured and uninsured all across Michigan. These NPs are found in health provider shortage areas across the state. As leaders of Michigan Council Of Nurse Practitioners we work to make the environment for nurse practitioners and nurses in Michigan better. We also are working to improve the health care outcomes for our citizens. Nurse Practitioners are baccalaureate prepared RNs who have graduated from a graduate nursing program and had courses in life sciences, physical sciences, clinical sciences, quality improvement mechanisms, leadership principles, evidence-based practice accompanied by precepted clinical experiences with patients in primary and acute care.

It may interest you to note that NPs have been providing the “holistic” approach to health care for nearly 45 years—and are the health care provider of choice for many people because of their unique combination of nursing and healthcare expertise and skills. NPs focus on health promotion, disease reduction, and health education and counseling, guiding patients to make smarter health and lifestyle choices. In addition to clinical services such as ordering, performing and interpreting diagnostic tests such as lab work and x-rays, identifying and treating acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections and injuries and other treatments. This patient-centered care is the model of care that NPs have provided since the inception of the NP role.

#### **Addressing the Nursing Shortage Through Enhanced Practice Environment**

Nursing shortages reflect a multitude of barriers in the profession: cost of education, shortage of nursing faculty, overburdening of nurses coupled with an antiquated regulatory environment for nursing in Michigan. We have more difficulty keeping nurse practitioners in Michigan because of an outmoded, restrictive regulatory environment, and yet our NP education programs continue to grow. Imagine what we could do if Michigan’s regulatory environment kept pace with the national agenda. The current regulatory environment in Michigan costs business, and the health care systems money, because of outdated restrictive regulations that have not kept up with current licensure, education and certification of NPs. Michigan Council Of Nurse Practitioners is committed to enhancing the practice environment in Michigan. An improved clinical practice environment for nurse practitioners and all nurses serves to attract and retain nurse practitioners in

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Michigan. States that have a favorable regulatory environment have an improved NP to citizens' ratio. Currently the ratio of NP to Citizen is 30:100,000 making us lower than the national average of 54: 100,000. This ratio ranks MI 47<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states and the District of Columbia. States with less restrictive regulatory environments have higher ratios, for example Alaska 102:100,000, Washington DC 154:100,000, Arizona 54:100,000, Indiana 47:100,000. Having an excellent practice environment goes a long way to creating a nurse friendly state that attracts and retains our brightest and finest nurse practitioners.

**Working to Improve Health care in Michigan**

Michigan Council Of Nurse Practitioners members are working daily to promote increased access to health care, improve cost efficiencies, develop strategies to better measure quality patient outcomes, and clarify regulation of nurse practitioners in an effort to improve outcomes of care. There is substantial data/evidence over 40 years regarding quality care of nurse practitioners.

Numerous evidence-based studies have repeatedly demonstrated that nurse practitioners provide care that is equal to, or in some cases, higher quality than that provided by physicians. Many organizations, PEW, IOM, and the Rand Report concur that removal of SOP barriers can improve primary care quality and efficiency of care. As the Macy Foundation recommended: we need to remove the barriers to NP practice and all primary care providers should be held accountable for the quality and efficiency of care as measured by patient outcomes.

Thank you for allowing us to contribute to this important discussion about Michigan's efforts to address the workforce issues that are impacting the provision

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of primary care in Michigan. There is no doubt that it will take incredibly hard work to create a health care environment that attracts and retains the best and brightest nurse practitioners. Keeping the best and brightest NPs here in Michigan is what is best for our citizens. We look forward to working with you in our efforts to improve the cost, quality and access of primary care in Michigan.

We will be happy to answer any of your questions, and we wish you the best as you make the difficult choices ahead on behalf of Michigan's citizens.