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DATE: October 3, 2013

TO: Senate Health Policy Committee

FROM: Randee Bloom, RN, MBA, PhD and Executive Council, AARP Michigan

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I have had decades of experience in the nursing profession, including as a clinician, administrator, and consultant. I earned my PhD in Public Service Leadership. My dissertation explored nurse volunteer service and documented a positive relationship between this practice and nurse role identity. For many nurses, their professional role is closely linked to their self-identification.

Under the auspices of nonprofit organizations or government agencies, retired nurses voluntarily care for many of our States' most needy citizens. This legislation will remove a critical barrier which today prevents others from volunteering in their professional capacity in Michigan.

I am also a volunteer member of the Executive Council of AARP-Michigan. AARP is committed to improving the access to health care for all Americans. Nationwide, volunteer nurses provide a variety of services including patient care, patient education, caregiver training and supervision, first aid, health screening and education, and even new nurse mentorship.

Additionally, AARP promotes volunteer service, recognizing the value for the doer. Research in the US and elsewhere has documented that volunteers are literally healthier than their non-volunteering counterparts. In fact, elder volunteers report healthier vital signs and lesser levels of depression.

The demand for nursing services in the US is projected to increase in the decades to come, while the money to support these expenses will lag. It would be wise to increase the potential pool of volunteer providers; to assist in unfunded but beneficial services.

Our Michigan legislature has previously acknowledged the value of volunteer service by healthcare professionals, including physicians and dentists. Now is the time to expand the reach of this contribution by including our largest healthcare profession, nurses.

Your affirmative vote will add Michigan to the list of states that recognize the vital service the nursing profession provides each of us and our families.

I salute this body for recognizing the nurse volunteer as a vital resource available in MI and by the passage of this legislation the cultivating and sustaining of this resource.

On behalf of all Michigan nurses and the residents we serve with our expertise and compassion, thank you for your time, attention and support of House Bill 4156.

Robert G. Romasco, President
Addison Barry Rand, Chief Executive Officer