



March 11, 2024

Representative Susan R. Donovan, Chair  
House Committee on Health and Human Services  
RI General Assembly  
RI State House  
82 Smith St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**Re: Testimony in support of House Bill 7696, AN ACT RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS-NURSES.**

Dear Representative Donovan,

I, Denise Coppa, from House District 31 and Legislative Liaison, representing the Nurse Practitioner Alliance of Rhode Island, am writing in support of House Bill 7696. To clarify, Certified Nurse Practitioners (CNP) are Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) who have successfully completed advanced education at the masters and/ or doctoral level and have taken professional certification or "board" exams that allow them to be licensed by the state of RI, with full practice authority. This includes the ability to diagnose, treat, and prescribe medications and to be the primary care provider of record for citizens in Rhode Island, across the life span.

This bill would void any attempt to restrict the practice of a CNP, similar to the prohibition of non-compete agreements for physicians, signed into law by Governor Raimondo on July 12, 2016.

As this committee is well aware, finding and securing a primary health care provider (PCP) in the current health care environment in Rhode Island is troubling, if not impossible. There are just not enough PCPs, so practices are having difficulty hiring and retaining physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants willing to continue to manage large case loads at far lower reimbursement rates, compared to our neighboring states. In addition, fewer students are entering primary care after graduation, attracted to specialty and esthetics practices that reimburse at rates 2-3 times more than primary care practices. In addition, according to the Office of the Health Care Commissioner (OHIC), "primary care is... the foundation of an equitable and high performing health care system". (CTC-RI, January, 2024, *Primary Care Access for All*). PCP's need the right to practice at their practice of choice, allowing their patients to continue to receive primary care services, regardless of geographic location or previous partnerships that are no longer viable.

Patients in all primary care practices deserve the right to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with their primary care providers, regardless of the setting where the provider practices. Please support this bill, essential to maintaining patient access to primary care providers.

Sincerely,

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