



NEWS RELEASE

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Legislation introduced to empower Arizona Advanced Practice Nurses, expand patient access to safe care

SB 1473 updates decades-old State regulations, protects patients

PHOENIX – The Arizona Coalition of Advanced Practice Nurses today announced the introduction of SB 1473, legislation that will modernize State regulations governing nurses with the highest education and most specialized patient focus. Hundreds of Arizona nurses and doctors, as well as groups ranging from the Goldwater Institute to AARP, are supporting the legislation because it safely removes bureaucratic burdens and expands patient access to quality care.

“This legislation complements the collaboration among health professionals to provide comprehensive care and access for services to patients,” said Sen. Nancy Barto (R-Phoenix), Chairwoman of the Senate Health Committee and sponsor of SB 1473. “It’s a great opportunity to better define what these practitioners can do in the scope of their work”

In December, a joint legislative panel comprised of House and Senate Health Committee members [formally endorsed this effort](#) to give Advanced Practice Nurses greater autonomy. There are about 6,500 Advanced Practice Nurses in Arizona. These nurses include: Nurse Practitioners; Certified Nurse-Midwives; Clinical Nurse Specialists and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists. SB 1473 will enable these nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

“Arizona has tremendous health care needs,” said Robin Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Arizona Nurses Association. “Many communities are facing a physician shortage at the same time patient demand has never been greater. But Arizona’s antiquated regulations – some of which date back a century – are preventing Advanced Practice Nurses from doing all they could to care for these patients. No less than the Institute of Medicine, the gold standard when it comes to public health research and policy, recommends greater autonomy for Advanced Practice Nurses because of the safe, reliable care we provide. It’s time to adopt SB 1473 and let nurses do their jobs.”

Advanced Practice Nurses undergo rigorous education and training, with at least a graduate-level degree and specialized focus of patient care. Decades of independent research demonstrates the safe, reliable care provided by these nurses. In fact, [a 2010 report](#) by the Institutes of Medicine of the National Academy of Science stated: “Now is the time to eliminate outdated regulations and organizational and cultural barriers that limit the ability of nurses to practice to the full extent of their education, training and competence.”

SB 1473 is modest legislation that ensures greater autonomy for Advanced Practice Nurses while clarifying imprecise sections of statute and updating decades-old provisions – in many cases bringing State law in line with what is already common healthcare practice in the field.



For example, one provision currently in State law indicates Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) must operate “under the direction of and in the presence of a physician or surgeon.” This belies reality in most modern health care settings, where the CRNA is entrusted to provide safe anesthetic or analgesic services while the physician is focused elsewhere – reading lab results, talking with family members or seeing other patients. Another provision of current law states that CRNAs can only “order” medications, which has inadvertently caused many CRNAs to lose their DEA numbers and be unable to prescribe medications as their job requires. The result: costly delays in patient care. SB 1473 will fix this and other issues.

“Opponents of this legislation must resort to scare tactics because the facts aren’t on their side,” said Ali Baghai, a CRNA at Tempe St. Luke’s Hospital and President of the Arizona Association of Nurse Anesthetists. “Advanced Practice Nurses are providing the highest quality care, but we remain shackled by aspects of State law that remain decades behind the times. This is an opportunity to streamline regulations and address a growing gap in Arizona patient care.”

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