



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

January 30, 2014

The Honorable Kathy Campbell
Chairperson
Health and Human Services Committee
Nebraska Legislature
District 25 State Capitol
P.O. Box 94604
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Senator Campbell:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), representing over 110,600 physicians and medical students nationwide, and our state chapter, the Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians, which represents over 1,200 active physicians, I am writing to strongly urge you to vote against Legislative Bill 916 (LB 916), which would remove provisions that govern integrated practice agreements between physicians and nurse practitioners (NPs) in Nebraska. This proposal would further fracture an already fragmented health care system, divert attention from the establishment and implementation of team-based care models, and potentially lower the quality of care for thousands of Nebraskans. The AAFP opposes legislation that would allow providers without adequate medical education and training to practice medicine outside of a physician-led health care team.

Fragmentation Is Costly and Dangerous

There is no question that our health care system is complex, especially with the implementation of new regulations as a result of the *Affordable Care Act*. The current system is fraught with hazardous mistakes and costly duplication, much of which is a direct result of the fragmentation that already exists. To address the quality problems and inefficiencies created by this fragmentation of health care delivery, the AAFP stresses the use of physician-led, patient-centered medical care teams. The AAFP has been one of the earliest supporters of the Patient Centered Medical Home model of care, because it requires physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and other members of the health care team to work together to ensure better quality and more efficient health care.

LB 916 specifically removes provisions that require NPs to practice with collaborating physicians in patient-centered care teams that engage in diagnosis, treatment and patient care. Allowing NPs the ability to independently diagnose, prescribe, treat, or provide other unsupervised services with no physician collaboration further splinters the health care team. This change would allow lesser qualified medical professionals to lead a patient's treatment without physician collaboration, which puts the patient at risk. NPs are important members of the medical team, but they do not have the medical education and training to provide full coordination of a patient's care. For this reason, a nurse practitioner is not a substitute for a physician when it comes to ensuring patient safety. The illusion of

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access to a larger provider pool would mislead patients by providing a false sense of patient safety, and is not the most effective way to increase access to health care.

While the need for more health care providers and increased access to life-saving medicine is evident across the country, the solution to remove collaborative agreements between physicians and nurses in Nebraska, and allow unqualified practitioners the ability to practice without physician oversight is not the right choice.

The AAFP commends the leadership of the Nebraska Legislature in its quest for a positive path toward better and more accessible health care. The current collaborative agreements obligatory by the Board of Medical Examiners exist in the interest of patient safety. This legislative proposal does not improve the collaboration of physician-led health care teams, nor does it increase patient safety; in fact, it does the exact opposite. For these reasons, we strongly urge you and your colleagues on the Senate Health and Human Services Committee to vote NO on LB 916.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have questions or need further information from the AAFP, please do not hesitate to contact Michelle Greenhalgh, Manager of State Government Relations, at mgreenhalgh@aafp.org or (202) 232-9033.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reid Blackwelder" followed by a stylized flourish.

Dr. Reid Blackwelder
President