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January 31, 2017

The Honorable Dean Kirby
Chair, Public Health and Welfare Committee
Mississippi State Senate
Capitol Room 212-D
PO Box 1018
Jackson, MS 39215

Re: AMA opposition to Mississippi Senate Bill 2916

Dear Chairman Kirby:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I write to express our opposition to Mississippi Senate Bill (SB) 2916. This bill would allow nurse practitioners (NPs) to practice independent of physician supervision, collaboration, or oversight, after completing a defined number of hours of clinical practice. Independent practice would also be conditioned on the NP's collaborative practice agreement being terminated as a result of the collaborating physician moving, retiring, no longer needing the NP's services, or another cause. As a result, SB 2916 would arbitrarily give NPs expanded authority to diagnose, treat, and prescribe medication including controlled substances, to patients without restriction and without any physician involvement. Our reasons for opposition are outlined below.

Mississippi's patients need health care professionals to work together

Health care delivery system reforms hinge on a team-based approach to care. With seven or more years of postgraduate education and thousands of hours of clinical experience, physicians are uniquely qualified to lead the health care team. Physicians, physician assistants, nurses and other clinicians have long worked together to meet patient needs for a reason: the team approach to care works.

However, independent practice and team-based care take health care delivery in two very different directions. One approach would further compartmentalize and fragment health care delivery; the other would foster integration and coordination. Moreover, as data suggest, NP independent practice does not lead to increased access to care or greater distribution of health care professionals.

Roles within the health care team should be based on education and training

The AMA believes that a physician is in the best position to serve as the leader of the health care team. Physicians' education, clinical training, and continuing medical education ensures that they are well equipped to diagnose and manage patient care. Physicians undertake more than 10,000 hours of clinical education and training during their four years of medical school and three-to-seven years of residency

training. In comparison, NPs have only between 500-720 hours of advanced nursing education and training. Even with the additional clinical practice hours SB 2916 requires, this proposal falls short.

Patients want physicians to lead the health care team

Patients recognize that physicians are most qualified to lead the health care team. AMA surveys conducted in 2010 and 2012 found that patients overwhelmingly want a coordinated approach to health care, with a physician leading the team. Key findings from these surveys include:

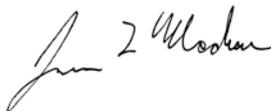
- Ninety-one percent of respondents said that a physician's years of education and training are vital to patient care, especially in the event of complication or medical emergency.
- Eighty-six percent of respondents said that patients with one or more chronic conditions benefit when a physician leads the health care team.
- Four out of five patients prefer a physician to have primary responsibility for leading and coordinating their health care.

AMA data also show that the vast majority of patients (79 percent) do not support NP practice that is independent of physicians, without physician supervision, collaboration or oversight. Rather, nearly all patients think that physicians and NPs should practice in a coordinated manner. In short, SB 2916 goes against what patients want.

As the provision of health care in this country becomes more complex, a fully coordinated, quality-focused and patient-centered health care team is the optimal means by which Americans will receive their health care. In the physician-led team approach, each member of the team plays a critical role in delivering efficient, accurate, and cost-effective care to patients. The AMA is committed to helping all members of the health care team work together in a coordinated, efficient manner to achieve the triple aim in health care: ensure that Mississippi's patients receive the highest quality of health care, at the lowest cost, resulting in the most optimal clinical outcomes. SB 2916 is contrary to this goal.

The AMA thanks you for the opportunity to submit these comments. If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Schleiter, JD, LLM, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at kristin.schleiter@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4783.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD