

Nursing's Public Policy Platform

Ensuring Virginians have access to sufficient numbers of highly qualified nurses while maintaining nursing's voice on public policy issues is a top priority. We seek the following commitments from the Commonwealth on behalf of Virginia's more than 107,000 registered nurses who, for the 15th consecutive year, were identified by Americans as the most trustworthy professionals in Gallup's annual "Honesty and Ethics" survey.

1. Enable Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to contribute to the healthcare solution by practicing to their full scope of education and training.

APRNs (nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists, nurse midwives, and clinical nurse specialists) have provided safe and effective care in Virginia for more than four decades. Virginia's APRNs currently have barriers to practice which include requirements for a collaborative practice agreement with a physician, inability to admit patients into hospice or home health and restrictions on prescription of controlled drugs. The current shortage of primary care physicians and the practice limit restrictions faced by APRN's limits Virginians access to care. Advanced practice registered nurses should be allowed to practice to their full scope of education and training.

2. Improve students' access to school nurses to ensure Virginia's youth is healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

School nurses bridge the gap between healthcare providers, families, and school staff by advocating for the health and wellness of their school communities. Access to a school nurse improves not only a student's health outcomes, but also his or her readiness to learn. In Virginia, there are no minimum staffing levels for school nurses. As a result, wide variability exists in school nurse staffing across the Commonwealth. As of 2016, Virginia's ratio of school nurses to students is 1:923. This stands in contrast to the Virginia Board of Education's 2016 Standards of Quality (SOQ) revised recommendations, which prescribe a ratio of one school nurse to every 550 students. To ensure Virginia students are healthy, safe, and ready to learn, it is imperative that all students have access to a school nurse on a daily basis.

3. Support legislative solutions that create and sustain conditions that support the health and well-being of all Virginians.

Every Virginian deserves the opportunity to live in a state of well-being and have access to safe and affordable healthcare. To ensure the optimal health of our citizens and communities, we must ensure that wellness is factored into decisions related to education, employment, housing, transportation, land use, economic, development, and public safety. We must work alongside community and government partners to support legislative solutions that promote a culture of health and tackle the population health issues highlighted in Virginia's Well-being Plan.