December 20, 2019

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 509F
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and the undersigned organizations representing nurse practitioners (NPs) of all specialties, we are writing to applaud the President’s recent Executive Order entitled Protecting and Improving Medicare for our Nation’s Seniors. We commend the Administration’s efforts to ensure that access to high-quality care is at the center of our health care system and that care is not hampered by outdated barriers to practice. We strongly agree that all health care providers should be able to practice to the top of their licenses and receive appropriate reimbursement.

As you are aware, nurse practitioners are advanced practice registered nurses who are prepared at the masters or doctoral level to provide primary, acute, chronic and specialty care to patients of all ages and walks of life. Daily practice includes, assessment; ordering, performing, supervising and interpreting diagnostic and laboratory tests; making diagnoses; initiating and managing treatment including prescribing medication and non-pharmacologic treatments; coordinating care; counseling; and educating patients and their families and communities. NPs hold prescriptive authority in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. NPs practice in nearly every health care setting including clinics, hospitals, Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Care facilities, emergency rooms, urgent care sites, private physician or NP practices (both managed and owned by NPs), nursing homes, schools, colleges, retail clinics, public health departments, nurse managed clinics, homeless clinics, and home health. NPs deliver high-quality care to those in rural and underserved areas. In fact, data shows that not only do NPs serve in rural and underserved areas but, most importantly, they remain in these areas. NPs complete more than one billion patient visits annually and approximately one third of all Medicare patients receive care from a nurse practitioner.

As of 2017, there were more than 130,000 NPs billing for Medicare services, making NPs the largest and fastest growing Medicare designated provider specialty. Based on Medicare’s claims data, approximately one out of every three Medicare patients receives billable services from a nurse practitioner. Over 82% of NPs are accepting new Medicare patients and 80.2% are accepting new Medicaid patients. NPs have a particularly large impact on primary care as approximately 73% of all NP graduates deliver primary care, and NPs comprise approximately one quarter of our primary care workforce, with that percentage growing annually.
One of the primary issues impacting the Medicare and Medicaid programs is a clinician shortage, particularly in primary care that is being exacerbated by an aging population. We strongly believe that our nation’s seniors’ access to care and choice of provider should not be compromised, and evidence shows that removing barriers to practice, including unnecessary supervision and other burdensome regulations will help maintain patient safety, lower health care costs and improve patient access to care. The Executive Order supports this movement, and we urge swift action.

The NP community broadly supports patient-centered care and team-based care for health systems; however, we believe that the needs of the patient should determine the composition and structure of the care team at the point of care. Team-based care is a multidisciplinary, non-hierarchical collaborative of various professionals centered on a patient’s needs and should not be thought of as a physician-led collaborative.

NPs have historically met resistance from the physician community and medical organizations. Yet despite the shortage of primary care clinicians, we are perplexed that since the release of the President’s Executive Order, the seemingly self-imposed physician hierarchy and insulting rhetoric directed toward NPs and non-physician providers has elevated. We can state emphatically and with confidence that the daily focus of NPs is directed at delivering high-quality health care to their patients and not spending their time battling against and insulting the physician community. We believe it is time to put patients first and in charge of their health care, and allow them to choose their provider.

Collectively, our organizations are honored to represent NPs who deliver high-quality care to millions of Americans in all settings. We urge you to move forward to implement the intent of the Executive Order.

Sincerely,

American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Nurses Association
Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
Nurse Practitioners in Women’s Health

Advanced Practice Nurses of New Jersey
Alaska Nurse Practitioner Association
Arizona Nurses Association Chapter 9 Arizona Nurse Practitioner Council
Arkansas Nurse Practitioner Association
Association of Missouri Nurse Practitioners
Association of Oklahoma Nurse Practitioners
BuxMont Nurse Practitioner Group
California Association for Nurse Practitioners
Chattanooga Area Nurses in Advanced Practice
Coalition of Advanced Practice Registered Nurses of Indiana
Connecticut Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Society
Delaware Coalition of Nurse Practitioners
Dermatology Nurses' Association
Excellence in Advanced Practice
Florida Association of Nurse Practitioners
Florida Nurse Practitioner Network
Fort Worth Region Nurse Practitioners
Forum of Nurses in Advanced Practice New Jersey
Illinois Society for Advanced Practice Nursing
Iowa Nurse Practitioner Society
Kentucky Association of Nurse Practitioners and Nurse Midwives
Lake County PA/NP Association
Lana‘i Community Health Center
Lea County Nurse Practitioner Group
LEAP Leadership, LLC
Lee County Nurse Practitioners
Louisiana Association of Nurse Practitioners
Maine Nurse Practitioner Association
Massachusetts Coalition of Nurse Practitioners
Metro Milwaukee Nurse Practitioners
Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners
Mississippi Association of Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners - Georgia Chapter
National Indian Nurse Practitioners of America
National Nurse Practitioner Entrepreneur Network
Nebraska Nurse Practitioners
Nevada Advanced Practice Nurses Association
New Hampshire Nurse Practitioner Association
North Alabama Nurse Practitioner Association
North Dakota Nurse Practitioner Association
Northwest Pennsylvania Nurse Practitioner Association
NP Business Consultants, LLC
Nurse Practitioner Alliance of Alabama
Nurse Practitioner Association of DC
Nurse Practitioner Association of Maryland, Inc.
Nurse Practitioner Association of South Dakota
Nurse Practitioner Council of Palm Beach County
Nurse Practitioner Society of the Dermatology Nurses' Association
Nurse Practitioners of Idaho
Nurse Practitioners of Lee County
Nurse Practitioners of Northeastern Pennsylvania
Nurse Practitioners of Oregon
Ohio Association of Advanced Practice Nurses
Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners
Practical Healthcare Solutions, Inc.
Puget Sound Nurse Practitioner Association
Society of Psychiatric Advanced Practice Nurses
South Florida Council of Advanced Practice Nurses, Inc.
South Georgia Association of Nurse Practitioners
St. Louis Nurses in Advanced Practice
St. Louis Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
Tampa Bay Advanced Practice Nurses Council
Tennessee Nurse Practitioner Association
Tennessee Nurses Association
Texas Nurse Practitioners
The Connecticut Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Society
The Maryland Academy of Advanced Practice Clinicians
The Minnesota APRN Coalition
The Nurse Practitioner Alliance of Rhode Island
The Nurse Practitioner Association New York State
Trudy Busch Valentine Saint Louis University School of Nursing
Upstate Nurse Practitioner Association
Utah Nurse Practitioners
Utah Nurse Practitioners Association
Vermont Nurse Practitioners Association
Virginia Council of Nurse Practitioners
West Virginia Nurses Association
Western Kansas Nurse Practitioner Alliance
Western Regional Advanced Practice Nurses Network
Wisconsin Nurses Association
Wyoming Council for Advanced Practice Nurses