

## Title "Nurse" Protection

### Introduction

The Pennsylvania State Nurses Association (PSNA) supports the introduction of Title Protection legislation being introduced by Senator David Argall and Representative Jim Cox. This legislation will ensure the safety and quality of patient care and avoid misrepresentation of those who are **not** licensed or educated to practice nursing in the Commonwealth.

This legislation would prevent anyone other than a licensed nurse from using the title "Nurse". Examples of individuals that may currently represent themselves as nurses: home health aide, personal care aide, personal care attendant, direct support aides, and Christian Science nurse.

### A Licensed Nurse is ...

An individual who has completed a state approved school of nursing program and who has successfully passed a state board of nursing licensing examination for either a Registered Nurse or a Licensed Practical Nursing program.

Nurses in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania complete formal education approved by the State Board of Nursing sit for a standardized exam and then are granted a license to practice. Nursing practice is governed by the State Board of Nursing. Nurses are currently required to complete continuing education classes to maintain licensure. Like other professions, nurses are self regulated as well as subject to professional and legal regulations.

### Issue

The use of the title "Nurse" is currently unprotected under Pennsylvania Law. Unlicensed individuals working as health assistants/technicians in medical facilities and educational settings can and do refer to themselves as "Nurse."

This misleads the public into believing the individual is educated and licensed to practice nursing. Reserving the title "Nurse" for those meeting the *educational* and *licensing standards* allows the public to distinguish licensed nurses from other healthcare providers.

### Intent of Bill

- Provide quality of patient care by licensed professionals
- Protect the title of "Nurse" to those educated and holding license in the Commonwealth
- Avoid misrepresentation among the public from individuals who are not licensed nurses
- Avoid inaccurate or even dangerous advice that could be given to a patient by an unlicensed professional

## Title "Nurse" Protection, continued

### Previous Bill History

In prior introduction of this bill, Christian Science Nurses argued that title protection would restrict their ability to practice. The law, however, stipulates under Section 4, paragraph 2 of the "Professional & Practical Nurse Laws" (for both LPNs and RNs) that the State Board of Nursing does not restrict the:

*"care of sick, with or without compensation or personal profit, when done solely in connection with the practice of the religious tenets of any church by adherents thereof."*

This bill, therefore, would allow the current practice of the Christian Science faith to continue. However, they would no longer be legally able to refer to themselves and to the public as "Nurse".

After careful consideration, PSNA has decided to support the bill without an exemption to the Christian Science "nurses."

### Christian Science "Nurse"

Christian Science "nurses" provide **non-medical** physical care for anyone relying on Christian Science for healing. This care includes bathing, dressing wounds, assistance with mobility and feeding. Christian Science "nurses" **do not** administer drugs or provide any sort of physical therapy or other medical treatment.

There is no standardized professional training for the practice of Christian Science "nursing." Preparation includes coursework provided by Christian Science "nursing" organizations, one-to-one training from an experienced Christian Science nurse, and/or experience with facility or private-duty Christian Science nursing. Christian Science nurses charge, insurance companies, individuals, and facilities, for the treatment they provide and set individual rates.

### Position Highlights

- The use of the title "Nurse" is not currently protected by Pennsylvania law.
- Unlicensed individuals working as health assistants or health technicians in medical facilities or schools can and do refer to themselves as a nurse.
- "Nurse" title protection ensures the safety and quality of patient care.
- Individuals receiving healthcare and those employing nurses have a right to know whether they are legally qualified nurses.
- Professionals who legitimately use the title "Nurse" are individually responsible and accountable for their actions and are required to adhere to professional codes of practice and ethics.