Tennessee Nurses Association: Legislative Advocacy 2013

Two of the most pressing issues being discussed at the Tennessee Legislature of interest to nurses (because of our primary interests in health, health care, and professional issues) relate to prescription drug abuse in our state and access to primary care services. There are a number of bills TNA is following related to these two issues. We have noted that in trying to address the prescription drug epidemic some bills will have an untoward effect on APRN scope of practice and therefore access to primary care services.

No one argues the seriousness of the prescription drug abuse problem. As nurses we need to be part of deliberations to forge a responsible, evidence-based, and inclusive complement of measures to address the problem. Therefore, there are some current bills TNA is supporting. In addition we advocating for stakeholders to come together to study the problem, benchmark what has been effective in other states, and develop a comprehensive response.

Unfortunately, there are some bills that aim to address the prescription drug abuse problem by restricting APRN practice. These solutions are not based on the evidence about the prescription drug abuse problem and will exacerbate the problems we face in Tennessee regarding access to high-quality primary care services.

Priority bills and initiatives for TNA at present, in rank order, are:

1. SB976/HB1211-Places additional supervisory restrictions on APRNs and RNs for writing prescriptions for controlled substances. **TNA STRONGLY OPPOSES this bill.** We are asking APRNs from across the state to do several things:
   a. Call your Senator and Representative to express their concerns about the bill, emphasizing the impact of the bill on their patients and their provision of care.
   b. Invite your Senator and Representative to your practice site so they can see firsthand the importance of the services you provide.
   c. Ask your colleagues, including physicians you work with on a regular basis, to voice their concerns about this bill.
   d. When the bill is on the committee schedule, send a letter to all committee members in opposition to the bill.

2. SB412/HB306-This is a TNA-sponsored bill, not related to prescription drug abuse or scope of practice. This is our workplace violence bill and it is our #2 priority. **TNA SUPPORTS this bill.** We need nurses to support this bill by emailing/calling their legislators; contacting committee members prior to the bill being heard and voted on in committee, and to be present for the committee meetings, if possible.
3. Medicaid expansion-TNA was the first statewide organization to pass a resolution in support of Medicaid expansion. The Medicaid expansion is essential for assuring access to care. Nurses need to contact their legislators about the Medicaid expansion.

4. SB1244/HB1256-This is a caption bill. We are currently watching this bill; stay tuned as things may change quickly. No action is needed at this time.

5. SB705/HB868-This bill prohibits the dispensing of controlled substances by pain management clinics. TNA SUPPORTS this bill as one approach for dealing with prescription drug abuse. We think an effective approach is to couple our opposition to SB976/HB1211 with support of this bill to show our support for addressing the prescription drug abuse problem, as long as it does not have the potential to have an adverse impact on access to care.

6. SB955/HB541-This bill requires any licensed practitioner under state or federal indictment for any offense involving the sale or dispensing of a controlled substances to report the indictment to their respective licensing board within 7 days and for the board to conduct an expedited review of the practitioner's conduct alleged in the indictment within 15 days. TNA SUPPORTS this bill as another means for dealing with prescription drug abuse. We think an effective approach is to couple our opposition to SB976/HB1211 with support of this bill to show our support for addressing the prescription drug abuse problem, as long as it does not have the potential to have an adverse impact on access to care.

Resources for Legislative Advocacy

How do you stay current with legislation?

1. Check the weekly TNA Legislative Update available at: [http://www.tnaonline.org/gov-affairs-home.html](http://www.tnaonline.org/gov-affairs-home.html)
3. Follow committee schedules, agendas, and live and archived videos of committee meetings at: [http://www.capitol.tn.gov/committees/](http://www.capitol.tn.gov/committees/)

Need basic advocacy information?