

2023: Nursing's Public Policy Platform

Nursing organizations from across Virginia seek the following commitments from the commonwealth on behalf of Virginia's more than 110,000 registered nurses.

Strengthening the Nursing Workforce

Ensuring Safe Staffing and Preventing Workplace Violence

The shortage of available healthcare professionals coupled with growing demand makes the importance of safe staffing even more critical. Nurses and other healthcare professionals are working longer hours and being assigned too many patients. Virginia should enact policies to empower nurses to be involved in creating appropriate staffing plans.

Additionally, policies must be enacted to better ensure healthcare professionals' safety at work. Healthcare professionals face an elevated risk of workplace violence from patients and other individuals; as much as five times higher in hospitals than the national average. These alarming numbers both exacerbate the current staffing crisis and ultimately jeopardize patient safety and quality outcomes.

Investing in Nursing Programs and Growing the Workforce

Virginia is experiencing an alarming shortage of healthcare professionals, especially in the nursing profession, while a deluge of nursing school applicants are being denied admission based not on merit, but rather on a lack of faculty and available clinical sites. It's crucial that the Commonwealth invest in growing nursing education programs in order to increase enrollment and thereby eliminate the staffing shortage. Investments should also support far greater diversity in faculty and admissions to ensure a future workforce that is truly reflective of our communities. Increases in faculty salaries and professional development, nursing scholarships, and preceptor incentives are imperative.

Increasing Access to Care

Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of All Virginia Communities

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated already-existing issues of mental healthcare access and health inequity in Virginia. All Virginia communities deserve the opportunity to live in a state of well-being and have access to safe and affordable healthcare. To ensure the optimal health of all Virginians, it is crucial that wellness be factored into decisions related to all policy areas, and that legislative solutions are advanced that promote a culture of health and tackle the barriers to wellness laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Nurse in Every Virginia School

School nurses are front line healthcare providers, serving as the bridge between the healthcare and education systems. They serve as public health sentinels, overseeing the physical and mental health of all students. For many children living in or near poverty, the school nurse is the only healthcare professional they see. School nurses are essential in communicable disease surveillance, identification, and intervention. Above all else, access to a school nurse is a student equity issue, and we must work toward ensuring there is a nurse in every school across Virginia by implementing the recommendations of the [2021 Study and Report](#) by the Virginia Department of Education.

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Reproductive Healthcare

Reproductive healthcare should be widely available, accessible, and affordable for all. Patients have the right to privacy and the right to make decisions about reproductive healthcare – including abortion if that is their wish – based on full information and without coercion. Nurses are obligated to share with their patients in an unbiased manner all relevant information about reproductive health choices that are available and to support that patient regardless of the decisions they make. We believe strongly in the importance of the patient-provider relationship, and that this relationship functions most effectively when patients are presented with all the relevant and necessary information to make shared decisions in their care.

Advancing Full Practice Authority

Eliminate Oversight of the Committee of the Joint Boards of Medicine and Nursing

In addition to being regulated by the Board of Nursing, regulations governing Virginia's advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) must go through an additional and unnecessary layer of approval by the Committee of the Joint Boards of Nursing and Medicine. A [2021 study](#) by the Department of Health Professions noted that Virginia is one of only three states with this extra layer of bureaucracy. This requirement is incongruent with the national [APRN Consensus Model](#), and the 2021 DHP study recommends regulating APRN nurses solely under the Board of Nursing.

Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Titling

Currently, all Virginia APRNs are titled as nurse practitioners in the Code of Virginia. State law should be updated to reflect the actual titles and roles of APRNs, including Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, Clinical Nurse Specialists, and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists. This is consistent with the national [APRN consensus model](#) and was recommended by the [2021 study](#) of APRNs by the Department of Health Professions.

Practice Authority for Nurse Practitioners and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists

Virginia law currently requires nurse practitioners to practice under a physician-led practice agreement for five years before transitioning to an autonomous license. This requirement is the most restrictive transition period in the nation. Many states require no transition period, and most states that do, require a one or two year transition period. Similarly, CRNAs are required to practice under the supervision of a physician. The APRN Consensus Model, developed by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, appropriately assumes all APRNs are able to practice autonomously upon graduation of an accredited program, and the 2021 study of APRNs by the Virginia Department of Health Professions recommends amending state law to conform to the national model.