



## CALIFORNIA SOCIETY OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

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Dear Esteemed Members of the Committee on Appropriations,

The California Society of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation understands you will be considering bill AB 890. The bill would allow nurse practitioners (NP's) to practice independently in California, without the benefit of having a physician involved in the patient's care and immediately available should a complex problem present itself. This would remove physicians from the health care team. I strongly urge you to oppose AB 890.

We know your time is valuable. AB 890 erroneously claims to solve California's physician shortage. While the bill was advertised to benefit patients, the following are myths propagandized by proponents of AB 890:

### **Nurse practitioners provide the same services as physicians- false**

A multi-disciplinary team, led by a physician, ensures that a physician is available should a nurse encounter a complex case that requires a physician's knowledge, training and experience. The education and training differences between physicians and NPs is significant. In fact, many NP degrees can be obtained online with clinical hours that pale in comparison to those of a physician. AB 890 makes no provisions to filter out the unqualified NPs from the qualified once they obtain their certificates. Patients will have no way of protecting themselves and will become guinea pigs for unsupervised individuals not trained in nursing, let alone advanced nursing. A physician's rigorous uniform and standardized education and training better prepares them to diagnose and treat complex cases and patients with multiple conditions.

### **Nurse practitioners will fill the healthcare gap in underserved areas- false**

Nothing currently prevents NPs from working in rural settings. They do what most health care professionals do, go where the money is: suburban and urban areas. This bill does not guarantee NPs will work in rural areas. It is a selling point that is unenforceable. Medispas are a huge issue in the state of CA; so much so that the medical board dedicates a whole section to it. Although CA is a supervised state, NPs open dermatology clinics, medispas, ketamine, hormone, rehab centers, etc. with "medical directors" who are basically doctors who sell their license so that these illegal clinics can flourish. If the Board of Medicine becomes aware of a physician selling his/her license for this purpose, that physician will suffer legal consequences. If this bill passes, there will be no oversight or accountability and these types of clinics will proliferate as they are extremely profitable.

### **Nurse practitioners provide the same level of care as physicians- false**

The Nurses Service Organization (NSO) and California Nurses Association (CNA) recently published malpractice data for NPs in CA from the period encompassing 2012-2016. It demonstrated that although lawsuits had decreased very slightly, the number of payouts had increased astronomically. The three top causes of litigation were missed diagnoses, misdiagnoses and over prescription of narcotics and antibiotics. Also included was a failure to or delay in involving supervising physicians. Again, CA is a supervised state. Once unsupervised, can one reasonably expect these issues to improve?

### **Once allowed to work independently, nurse practitioners will be regulated by a board like the Medical Board of California regulates physicians- false**

The Boards of Medicine and Nursing have refused to oversee NPs should this bill pass. A new board will have to be formed with no identified source of funding. It makes no sense to pass a bill allowing NPs to practice unsupervised w/o oversight of any kind. No accountability whatsoever. Who will protect the public?

### **There is a physician shortage that will be solved by allowing nurse practitioners to work independently- false**

There is no reason NPs need to fill a "physician gap" when so many unmatched med school graduates sit on the shelf due to lack of residency spots. Nearly 8000 MDs/DOs, since 2016, including Foreign Medical Graduates and International

Medical Graduates, sit on the shelf collecting dust while a bipartisan bill, the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2019 festers on the Hill. This bill would release CMS funds to open 3000 residency slots/year for 5 years. The Assistant Physician (AP, not to be confused with PA) Graduate programs, which allow these unmatched doctors to work in rural areas supervised by practicing physicians exist in Missouri, Utah, Kansas, and Arkansas. They are successful and provide physicians for underserved areas. These doctors can maintain their skills and knowledge until they can apply to residency the following year. These are much better options. And safer.

As physicians, we respectfully ask you to vote NO on AB 890 by Assembly member Wood. This bill would remove critical patient protections by allowing nurse practitioners (NP) to practice without physician supervision. AB 890 is merely an outline that lacks critical details surrounding competency. The bill currently lets NPs provide any type of care - including specialty care – to any area of California. AB 890 does not require independent nurse practitioners to serve underserved populations or designated underserved regions, which is the goal of the supporters of this bill.

Our society urges you to vote NO on AB 890 (Wood) to maintain patient safety!

Please contact our society if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The California Society of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation