



NCSBN

National Council of State Boards of Nursing

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September 9, 2015

The Honorable Brad Wenstrup
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Chairman, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mark Takano
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Wenstrup and Ranking Member Takano:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for your subcommittee's hearing entitled, "A Review of Licensing and Credentialing Standards for Service Members and Veterans: Do Barriers Still Remain?"

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) is an independent, non-profit association comprising 59 boards of nursing (BONs) from across the U.S., the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories. BONs are responsible for protecting the public through regulation of licensure, nursing practice and discipline of the 5.2 million registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical/vocational (LPN/VNs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) in the U.S. with active licenses, in addition to the approval of prelicensure nursing education programs in the U.S. NCSBN was created by these boards of nursing to act and counsel with one another and to lessen the burden of government. The mission of NCSBN is to provide education, service and research through collaborative leadership to promote evidence-based regulatory excellence for patient safety and public protection. Through NCSBN, BONs can work together on policy matters that will affect the future of nursing and health care.

The 2013 White House report, "The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans and Their Spouses", encourages states to support legislative efforts that will transition veterans into the civilian workplace.

NCSBN wholeheartedly joins these efforts valuing the contributions veterans have made in the military by acknowledging their training and experience. NCSBN supports federal and state legislation that will help veterans safely and competently enter civilian careers in nursing.

Recently, there has been an emphasis placed on transitioning military medics, corpsmen and airmen to civilian roles as LPN/VNs. NCSBN staff, with consultation from leading experts in the areas of nursing and military education, conducted [an in-depth analysis of the health care specialist \(medic\), corpsman and airman curricula, and compared these with a standard LPN/VN curriculum](#). The following are key findings and recommendations that will be helpful for policymakers introducing legislation related to this topic.

LPN/VN education is different than the training received by health care specialists (medics), corpsmen or airmen. NCSBN encourages legislation that supports the development of LPN/VN bridge programs allowing health care specialists (medics), corpsmen and airmen to receive credit for the knowledge, skills, and abilities they acquired in the military, and recommends focusing content on gaps in knowledge, the nursing process, and differences between the military and LPN/VN roles and scope of practice.

NCSBN and BONs are working with many groups to address different aspects of this project and should be involved in any discussions regarding this endeavor so that it can assist in assuring that veterans have a safe and smooth transition into a career in nursing.

Additionally, NCSBN has supported the continued inclusion of the NCLEX-RN® and NCLEX-PN® (National Council Licensure Examination) to the qualified list of non-federal government licensure/certification examinations by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The NCLEX® is the nationally recognized exam taken by RN and LP/VN graduates to ensure every licensed nurse has met state education requirements and is competent to practice nursing safely. The inclusion of the NCLEX® allows for eligible veterans and their dependents (as defined by the Department of Veterans Affairs) to be reimbursed for the cost of test(s) given to qualify an individual for a vocational license or certificate. Currently, qualifying veteran candidates have no limit as to the number of times the exam can be taken.

NCSBN also strives to offer providers the opportunity to practice safely and competently across state lines without undue licensure burdens. One way that we have worked to facilitate interstate mobility of nurses is through our Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), an interstate compact that allows a nurse to have one multistate license (in his or her state of residency) that grants the privilege to practice in other NLC participating states (both physically and electronically), subject to each state's practice laws and regulations. NCSBN launched the NLC in 2000 in an effort to expand the mobility of nurses as part of our nation's health care delivery system. Currently, 25 U.S. states have adopted the NLC. That number is expected to grow in the coming years as the states begin to adopt a newly enhanced version that addresses concerns raised by states that have not yet joined.

In addition to the NLC, we have also developed a compact that would facilitate interstate license portability for APRNs, who are increasingly delivering primary care and helping with chronic disease management via telehealth. The APRN Compact maintains most of the same principles as the NLC, including a mutual recognition licensing model that would allow an APRN to practice in any participating state with just one license.

BONs under the NLC facilitate interstate cooperation and coordination through participation in NCSBN's Nursys® program, the only national database currently available for verification of nurse licensure and discipline for RNs, LPN/VNs and APRNs. Nursys® allows access to the status of a nurse's license and provides information about any history of discipline.

Ultimately, the NLC and the APRN Compact create the necessary legal structure that requires BONs to report and share license and discipline information with one another, a key component to ensuring nurse competency and patient safety across the country.

NCSBN looks forward to continuing to work with the Committee, veterans, and other stakeholders to address issues involving veterans and their efforts to become a civilian licensed nurse. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Elliot Vice, NCSBN's Director of Government Affairs, can be reached at evince@ncsbn.org and 202-530-4830. We look forward to continuing the dialogue with you on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Kathy Apple, MS, RN, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer