



WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman John W. Olver (D-MA) has introduced H.R. 2134, the *Medicaid Advance Practice Nurses & Physicians Assistants Access Act*, legislation to expand primary care options, and potentially cut Medicaid costs, by improving access to advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) and physician assistants (PAs). The Medicaid Advanced Practice Nurse and Physician Assistants Access Act would require states to offer Medicaid coverage for primary care services provided by APRNs, the majority of whom are nurse practitioners, and PAs.

"We must do everything we can to expand the availability of quality medical care," Congressman Olver said. "This bill proposes to do just that. State Medicaid agencies choosing not to reimburse for the services of nurse practitioners and physician assistants just doesn't make sense. In areas with a shortage of physicians, such as rural and inner city communities, these medical professionals should be able to provide the quality health care that would otherwise be difficult for Medicaid beneficiaries to access."

Currently, state Medicaid plans have the option to deny advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants recognition as primary care case managers. In states that choose not to recognize APRNs and PAs, Medicaid patients lose the services these health care providers could offer or are forced to pay for these services out of their own pocket. Because nurse practitioners and physician assistants often are the primary source of care in medically underserved areas, not offering these providers as an option to Medicaid beneficiaries could cause patients to delay or avoid seeking primary care. This can lead to more costly – and otherwise preventable – medical complications down the road.

Requiring Medicaid to cover services provided by nurse practitioners and physician assistants also makes good fiscal sense.

"Not only does this bill provide more options for Medicaid beneficiaries, it also could yield a

savings to Medicaid," Congressman Olver added. "Reimbursement rates for nurse practitioners and physician assistants are often 10 to 30 percent less than physicians' rates. This could translate into a significant savings," he added.

"APRNs increase patients' access to primary and preventive health care, and as a result, the number of hospital admissions and emergency care visits decrease," said Karen A. Daley, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN, president of the American Nurses Association.

"By including the provisions of The Medicaid Advanced Practice Nurses and Physician Assistants Access Act in Medicaid reform, Congress would ensure that Medicaid patients receive care in a timely and cost-effective manner, and they would help ease the shortage of health care professionals that rural and other underserved areas struggle with—while also guaranteeing that APRNs receive adequate reimbursement for the high-quality patient care they provide."

The bill is endorsed by the American Nurses Association, the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, the American College of Nurse Practitioners, the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties, National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health, and the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association.

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