

APRNs Have the Qualifications; They Need to be Empowered

Over one million Wisconsinites live in an area where health care professionals are in short supply, yet the State of Wisconsin continues to tie the hands of some of our most qualified health care professionals. That's a problem, and I'm working to fix it.

There are about 5,000 Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) providing vital care to patients across our state. These nurses have earned advanced degrees, completed hundreds of hours of clinical training, and are well-qualified to provide excellent care. Current law, however, doesn't allow these professionals to practice to the full extent of their training.

That's why I'm working with Senator Rachael Cabral-Guevara, a licensed Advance Practice Nurse Prescriber/Family Nurse Practitioner, and Representative Gae Magnafici, a registered nurse, to pass legislation that will cut red tape and empower these professionals to do the work they are trained to do.

The bill we've proposed is a reintroduction from last session that would modernize the statutes governing APRN practice. Twenty-six states – as politically diverse as Connecticut and Utah – and the District of Columbia have already enacted similar reforms. It's past time for Wisconsin to join them.

During the pandemic, when we depended on these professionals more than ever, the State of Wisconsin rolled back the restrictions on advanced practice nurses. Take for instance, the story of Jessica in Racine. At the beginning of the pandemic, Jessica was working in a traditional Urgent Care setting. With many people afraid or unable to visit the hospital even for routine treatment, Jessica found a way to provide patients with service in their homes. Ronda, a long-term care provider from rural Northwestern Wisconsin has a similar story. For nearly a year and a half, she continued to deliver care at a time when physician visits stopped. Tina in Waupaca noted how the “handcuffs” on her practice were removed during the pandemic to enable her to meet the dramatically increased demand. Her reward for meeting the challenge? Having those handcuffs slapped back on.

These nurses stepped up, only to be told by some to take a step back. That's not right.

APRNs are a vital part of our health care workforce. We count on them, especially in areas where health care access is more limited – like rural Wisconsin.

Qualified professionals must be treated as such. I am proud to be an advocate for APRNs, and I am committed to getting this bill passed.