

POSITION STATEMENT

"NURSE" TITLE PROTECTION

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The 173,000 plus Registered Nurses in Michigan are essential to the health and safety of the state's residents.¹ The title "Nurse" is not included in the list of protected titles in the Michigan Public Health Code (MPHC). Thus, the residents of Michigan cannot be assured that individuals calling themselves nurses possess the education and competencies required for licensure and safe practice.² At least 39 states have adopted language in their nurse practice acts restricting use of the title "Nurse" or language implying an individual is a nurse who is educated and licensed as authorized by the state.³ Despite Recommendation 2a of the Michigan Department of Community Health Task Force on Nursing Practice that "Nurse" be included as a protected title in the MPHC and the Administrative Rules of the Michigan Board of Nursing, Michigan remains in the minority of states without title protection for "Nurse."^{2,3}

Nursing has been ranked as the most respected, ethical profession in Gallup polls for 16 consecutive years since 2002.⁴ This trust in nursing must be safeguarded from individuals and groups who misrepresent themselves as nurses thus threatening safety and health of the public.⁵ Tolerating overt use of the title "Nurse" or misleading titles implying individuals other than those who have met the requirements for licensure from state boards of nursing lends itself to exploitation of vulnerable individuals and erosion of nursing's well-earned public reputation and confidence.

Nursing licensure and title protection are regulated with the primary purpose of protecting the public.⁶ Nursing licensure requires specialized knowledge and independent decision-making and mandates a minimum level of demonstrated and documented competency for a specific scope of practice.^{2,6} Title protection assures that individuals without the minimum education and competency for licensure cannot misrepresent themselves to the public as nurses.

The title "Nurse" should be protected in the MPHC consistent with the titles "Physician", "Dentist", "Chiropractor", and "Social Worker".² Individuals not licensed and registered by the state can and do use the title "Nurse."² Legally tolerated arbitrary use of the title "Nurse" by those who do not possess the minimum education and competencies

for licensure in the State of Michigan confuses public and places it at risk.² Just as has been done in the majority of other states, the title "Nurse" must be defined and protected in the MPHC so that patients and families can be assured that their nurse possesses legitimate education and competencies to safely care for them.²

References

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