

Suzanne Drake, PhD, APN
The Wellness Group of New Jersey, LLC
400 D Lake Street, Suite 2
Ramsey, New Jersey, 07446

March 17th, 2015

The Honorable Chris Christie
Governor, State of New Jersey
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0001

Re: S1152 / A1319

Dear Governor Christie,

I live in Scotch Plains and practice in Ramsey, New Jersey. I am writing to you regarding bill S1152 / A1319 (Weinberg, Vitale / Munoz, Quijano) currently for your consideration, that would permit attending Advanced Practice Nurses to determine the cause of death and execute the death certificate of their patient if the APN is patient's primary caregiver and if no collaborating physician is available to do so.

Advanced Practice Nurses are registered nurses who have advanced education and clinical preparation to provide primary care, diagnose and treat acute and chronic illnesses in a variety of specialties. Under current law, they are empowered to pronounce death, ascertain the cause of death and provide the medical information required by the death certificate, but by law, they are not authorized to sign the death certificate.

Advanced Practice Nurses are often the last caregiver in attendance when a patient dies. If the state deems them qualified to diagnose and treat a person while they are living, there is no logical reason for denying these skilled health care professionals from completing a certificate of death.

This bill will also help reduce costs by avoiding unnecessary referral to doctors and/or unnecessary autopsies while remaining sensitive and responsive to the needs of families and loved ones at the time of death. Twenty-seven states authorize Advanced Practice Nurses to sign death certificates including neighboring NY, CT, PA, DE, MD, DC RI, MA, VT. Please sign this bill into law to give Advanced Practice Nurses under specific circumstances the authority and responsibility to complete death certificates in the same manner as physicians, thus ensuring the delivery of timely, appropriate and medically accurate postmortem care. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Suzanne Drake, PhD, APN