

MEMORANDUM

To: All House Members

From: Rep. Jaret Gibbons

Date: February 23, 2011

Subject: Co-sponsorship of Legislation: Defining Scope of Practice for Psychiatric Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialists

In the near future, I will re-introduce former HB 1922 of the 2009-2010 legislative session. This bill provides for a scope of practice for Psychiatric Mental Health Clinical Nurse Specialists (PMHCNS).

This legislation will codify in statute a scope of practice that reflects the current education level and practice parameters now performed by PMHCNS throughout the country. It does not expand their recognized scope in any way. This legislation does not give prescriptive authority to PMHCNS as part of their scope of practice, although this discipline does have prescriptive privileges in many other states.

PMHCNS possess, at a minimum, a master's degree in nursing with additional education in the following fields: psychotherapy practices, neurobiology of mental illness, building therapeutic alliances, dealing with challenging behavior, as well as, the systems that support patient care. The PMHCNS provides comprehensive patient-centered mental health care to individuals, groups, and families across the lifespan and often work in cooperation with physicians (psychiatrists and other disciplines including general/family practitioners). PMHCNS receive national board certification in the specialty by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. The PHMCNS (as well as the Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner) are the only health care providers, other than physicians, who have the education and training in the biological aspects of mental illness and its treatment. They are extremely important and valuable practitioners in the mental health care environment in our state.

In summary, there is a great need for access to quality, cost-effective mental health care in Pennsylvania. We must define in statute the current scope of practice for PMHCNS, so that they will continue to receive third-party reimbursement, as they have since the 1960s. By defining the scope of practice for PMHCNS we codify their status as a primary care provider and have a positive impact of access to mental health services in the Commonwealth.

If you would like to join me in co-sponsoring this important legislation, please contact Susan Finger in my office at sfinger@pahouse.net or at 717-705-2060.