



Statement of the Pennsylvania Homecare Association

In front of the

**House Professional Licensure Committee
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**Presented by
Andrea Devoti, Executive Director
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And

Public Policy Chairperson for the Pennsylvania Homecare Association

Good morning. My name is Andrea Devoti. I'm the Executive Director of Neighborhood Health Agencies, and the public policy chairperson of the Pennsylvania Homecare Association.

Neighborhood Health Agencies is a West Chester-based, home health and hospice agency that provides health care services in more than 500 people's homes on any given day. We employ more than 168 nurses, physical, occupational and speech therapists, and home health and hospice aides. All of whom are licensed health care professionals in the state of Pennsylvania and would be required to meet the obligations of this legislation.

I commend the committee for holding this hearing to stimulate further discussion concerning the proposed Health Care Practitioner Identification Badge Act.

Pennsylvania's in-home care providers, including home health agencies, hospices and home care agencies which provide personal care services in people's homes are all licensed or soon to be licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health under the Health Care Facilities Act. As such, health care practitioners working in a health care facility are required under Chapter 51.6 of the Act, Identification of Personnel, to:

- Wear an identification badge which display's that person's name and professional designation, including:
 - Health care practitioners licensed or certified by Commonwealth agencies.
 - Health care providers employed by health care facilities.
- Include the individual's full name and abbreviated professional designations, when permissible by law, or the full title on the identification tag.
- Limit the ID badge to the use of the first name only if using the last name places the practitioner in jeopardy.

These requirements that are already in practice mirror the core standards included in HB 2727. The only standard not required by the Health Care Facilities Act is the requirement of a photograph of the practitioner. While this is not currently a requirement under the Health Care Facilities Act, at Neighborhood Health Agencies we already include a photograph on each individuals ID badge. In an informal survey of its membership, the Pennsylvania Homecare Association found that the majority of agencies already comply with the photograph requirement.

As an association, we have a number of concerns with this legislation, while also respecting the need for health care practitioners to be properly identified when providing services within a health care setting.

Duplicative Legislation

As I mentioned before, health care facilities already must comply with the majority of the standards proposed in HB 2727. What the Health Care Facilities Act does not require are specific badge and font sizes and photo identification. While the legislation offers that the state boards “shall issue two identification badges...upon the issuance of an original or renewed professional license, certificate or registration” the state issued identification badges would not properly identify the health care facility in which the practitioner is working. Though this may not be a requirement under the Health Care Facilities Act, it is standard practice to properly identify the employer on the identification badge in in-home care. This practice of identifying the employer assists the consumer in properly identifying workers coming into their home.

To comply with these requirements, particularly within a 60 day timeframe upon passage of this legislation, would result in a large financial burden for agencies, resulting in one more unfunded mandate and adding to

the already high cost of health care as agencies would need to create their own badges with employer identification.

Alternative identification badges

Although the legislation allows for the use of alternative identification badges, no details are provided on how an approval would be granted by the bureau and what steps this process would entail. For example, would approval be granted on an individual basis, practitioner to practitioner, or would a facility be allowed to submit a sample badge for approval by the bureau? How frequently would alternative badges have to be updated? What agency will survey compliance with this legislation?

Essential Employees

The Pennsylvania Homecare Association would like to see such legislation address the issue of emergency personnel. During times of disaster, the Governor may restrict highway travel to “essential employees”. During these times of crisis it is essential for health care personnel to have the ability to travel freely to be able to provide necessary medical care, either in an institutional setting such as a hospital, or within an individuals’ home. For some of our patients, the need to have their nurse visit them in the home can be the difference between life and death.

We would suggest that the legislation include standardized language that could be added to the back of the identification badge that would allow health care practitioners to be considered “essential personnel” and have the authority to travel during a declared national, state or local emergency, pursuant to Title 75, Section 6108 (a) Power of Governor during emergency.

Definitions

The term health care facility needs to be defined. Does this term only include only facilities licensed under the Health Care Facilities Act or does it include other facilities such as personal care homes and the soon to be licensed assisted living facilities, both of which are licensed by DPW? Can these types of entities apply for alternative identification badges?

The Pennsylvania Homecare Association and its members agree that health care personnel should be properly identified so that patients can be apprised of the identity and licensure credentials of individuals who provide health care services to them. But rather than adding another statute we ask that the legislature work with the Department of Health to amend the health care facilities act. Thank you for this opportunity to share my insights and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.