May 9, 2013

The Honorable Kevin de León
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE:   SB 491 (Hernandez), as amended May 1, 2013
Scheduled for Hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 13, 2013
Position: Support

Dear Senator de León:

The University of California (UC) is pleased to support Senate Bill (SB) 491, a bill introduced by Senator Hernandez in the current legislative session that proposes changes in the “scope of practice” for nurse practitioners who are licensed to practice in California.

The implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will have an unprecedented impact on California’s demand for health services and will exacerbate existing statewide health workforce challenges. The approximately 1.7 to 3 million Californians who will become eligible for health benefits in 2014, and the demographic changes occurring in the state (i.e., the growth and aging of the current population), will significantly increase the demand for primary care providers, including physicians, nurses, physician assistants, and others. Enabling nurse practitioners to work and practice to the full extent of their education and training is an appropriate and available strategy that will help address the primary care physician shortage and expand access to care for many Californians.

As you are likely aware, the University of California operates the largest health sciences system in the nation. Collectively referred to as UC Health, this system includes 17 health professional schools on seven UC campuses, and 10 hospitals operated by the UC medical centers. SB 491 proposes changes that could impact UC in many important ways given the University’s roles as educators of future California health professionals; providers of clinical care in UC hospitals and clinics; and employers facing rising health benefit costs for UC employees.
Among UC’s 17 health professional schools and many other health professions training “programs” are three UC Schools of Nursing (located at Davis, Los Angeles, and San Francisco), and a growing program in Nursing Science at UC Irvine. All four of these UC campuses train advanced practice nurses. Each school/program is accredited by the national Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) – which is an autonomous accrediting agency contributing to the improvement of the public’s health by ensuring the quality and integrity of baccalaureate, graduate, and residency programs in nursing. All of these UC programs have exceptional records of success, with virtually no attrition. Of particular relevance to the state, graduates of UC nurse practitioner programs consistently meet high national and state standards in terms of certification and licensure, and also demonstrate high rates of in-state retention and a long-standing commitment to serving medically underserved communities in both rural and urban inner-city locations.

The proposed changes envisioned in SB 491 would bring California in line with 17 other U.S. states that have adopted full practice authority for nurse practitioners. The intent of this measure aligns with guiding principles that UC considers when reviewing scope of practice legislation, including this important measure. Among these are consideration of issues related to: quality of care; access to care; leveraging skills and qualifications, and the anticipated cost impact. The Institute of Medicine’s 2010 report entitled The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health and other systematic reviews of the research provide compelling evidence that advanced practice nurses are educated, prepared and qualified to provide high quality patient care in a manner that meets professional standards. In this era of limited resources, the changes proposed in Senator Hernandez’s SB 491 would help increase workforce capacity, improve access to care, and offer much-needed cost savings to California.

On behalf of the University of California, the UC nursing schools and programs, and the people who will benefit from the services of UC’s future advance practice nurse graduates, we commend Senator Hernandez for his leadership on this issue and urge your “aye” vote in committee. Please feel free to contact me at (510) 987-9071, or Angela Gilliard in our Sacramento office at (916) 445-9924, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

John D. Stobo, MD
Senior Vice President
cc: The Honorable Edward Hernandez
Vice Chair and Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
President Mark G. Yudof
Provost Aimée Dorr
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Associate Vice President and Director Steve Juarez
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