REQUESTING THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND LABOR STUDY THE ROLE OF AN ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSE AS A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER WITHIN THE ARKANSAS MEDICAID PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the demand for primary care services in the United States is expanding and expected to continue expanding over the next several years as a result of the growth and aging of the population of the United States and enactment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Pub. L. 111-148; and

WHEREAS, in the Primary Care Needs Assessment report dated August 2015, the Office of Rural Health and Primary Care of the Department of Health identified three (3) main challenges to healthcare progress in Arkansas:

(1) The supply, capacity, and distribution of primary care providers in Arkansas is not sufficient to meet the healthcare needs of Arkansans and is not likely to change in the short term;

(2) There are gaps in healthcare access, quality of care, and geographic barriers that negatively impact care in rural and underserved communities and populations; and

(3) The demand for healthcare services will be driven by a rapidly increasing population of elderly Arkansans and a general population that experiences differentially high rates of chronic disease; and

WHEREAS, Arkansas has over thirty-five thousand (35,000) registered nurses and two thousand three hundred eighty-two (2,382) advanced practice registered nurses; and

WHEREAS, one thousand six hundred ninety-nine (1,699) advanced practice registered nurses have prescriptive authority; and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Medicaid Program, including the Arkansas Patient-Centered Medical Home model and the Medicaid Primary Care Case Management Program, does not recognize advanced practice registered nurses as primary
whereas, the kaiser family foundation’s article tapping nurse practitioners to meet rising demands for primary care (january 2015) found that close to ninety percent (90%) of advanced practice registered nurses are prepared in primary care, advanced practice registered nurses can manage eighty to ninety percent (80 - 90%) of care provided by primary care physicians, and advanced practice registered nurses are significantly more likely than primary care physicians to practice in urban and rural areas, provide health care in a wider range of community settings, and serve a high proportion of uninsured patients and other vulnerable populations; and

whereas, the institute of medicine’s report, the future of nursing: leading change, advancing health (2010), issued recommendations to ensure that registered nurses, particularly advanced practice registered nurses, practice to the fullest extent of their licensure, accreditation, certification, and education as well as perform as full partners in the redesign of health care in the united states; and

whereas, these recommendations serve as a blueprint toward a healthcare system which provides patient-centered and evidence-based quality health care with improved health outcomes by utilizing nurses, which are the nation’s largest healthcare workforce; and

whereas, a 2010 study by the institute of medicine shows that a higher concentration of primary care providers, particularly advanced practice registered nurses, results in a higher quality of health care and lower costs for health care; and

whereas, other studies demonstrate that advanced practice registered nurses are more likely to practice in medically underserved areas than primary care physicians, which increases access for medicaid beneficiaries; and
WHEREAS, several states across the nation, including Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Vermont, have amended state laws to expand the scope of practice for advanced practice registered nurses to practice primary care as a primary care provider; and

WHEREAS, a 2012 report by the National Governors Association found that health care provided by an advanced practice registered nurse "is comparable" to health care provided by a physician "on several process and outcome measures" and advanced practice registered nurses "may provide improved access to care"; and

WHEREAS, if regulatory and statutory barriers to utilization as a primary care provider were removed, advanced practice registered nurses have the potential to create new access points for patients and Medicaid beneficiaries throughout the state by opening new clinics and to increase the employment rates of the state by employing new individuals in the communities; and

WHEREAS, for the health of its citizens, the General Assembly should pursue efforts to improve access to health care by utilizing the adaptive capacity of advanced practice registered nurses across the healthcare continuum; and

WHEREAS, the opportunity exists to more fully utilize advanced practice registered nurses in the healthcare system of Arkansas,

NOW THEREFORE,
BE IT PROPOSED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE, AND LABOR OF THE NINETIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor study the role of an advanced practice registered nurse as a primary care provider within the Arkansas Medicaid Program to the fullest extent of their licensure, accreditation, certification, and education.
BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT, upon request, the Arkansas Nurses Association and the Arkansas State Board of Nursing shall provide assistance to the House Committee on Public Health, Welfare, and Labor to perform this study.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Dan Sullivan
District 53

By: JMB/JMB