

SB 94 “Signature Authority for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses.” Signed into law March 12, 2019 with Governor Bullock and our sponsor Senator Gauthier.

SB 94 is simply a signature authority of certified registered nurse practitioners. Therefore, when a provision of law or administrative rule requires a signature, certification, stamp, verification, affidavit, or endorsement by a physician, the requirement may be fulfilled by an advanced practice registered nurse practicing within the scope of the advanced practice registered nurse's certification.; provided, however, that nothing in this section shall be construed to expand the scope of practice of nurse practitioners.

Advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) in Montana have full practice and prescriptive authority to the full extent of their education. APRNs include Nurse practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, Clinical Nurse Specialists and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists.

As many APRNs provide primary and specialty care in Montana, they are still unable to sign required documents for patients, insurance companies, and referrals that are within their scope of practice due to the form, document or verification still requiring a physician's signature. Because of this, many patients are being forced to see a physician unfamiliar with their health care history adding stress and anxiety to the patient and increasing healthcare costs. This bill will pave the way for patients to continue to receive care from their chosen primary care provider and decrease costs to consumers.

As part of their daily practice, APRNs provide comprehensive health care to patients within the scope of their licensure, education, and certification. Outdated signature laws may direct that some of the ‘paperwork’ associated with this care include a physician's signature in order to be recognized, even though the physician did not provide the care to the patient.

Examples of signature authority activities include but not limited to:

- Providing certification for disabled patients to obtain parking permits/placards from the DMV
- Signing sports physicals for student athletes
- Signing physicals for school bus drivers to transport our students
- Signing important forms related to end-of-life care
- Signing forms excusing a potential jury member due to illness
- Signing workers' compensation forms for employees injured on the job
- Providing proof that a patient has a health need that requires their utilities to remain on despite inability to pay their bill for the month
- Signing Immunization exemption forms
- Patient referrals
- DPHHS medical/healthcare forms

This bill **does not expand the scope of practice for APRNs**; it simply authorizes them to “**treat the paperwork**” for the care they have already provided to the patient.

In conclusion, this legislation clarifies that whenever any law or regulation requires a signature, certification, stamp, verification, affidavit or endorsement by a physician, these statements shall be applied and deemed appropriate to be signed by an advanced practice registered nurse within their scope of practice. It in no way expands the scope of practice and this bill will ease the burden of costly duplicative services and not delay care for patients.

The Montana Nurses Association, on behalf of the professional nurses they represent, would like to thank Senator Gauthier for being a champion for professional nurse issues and sponsoring this legislation to improve access to healthcare for the patients in Montana our APRNs provide care for.