

SCNA Begins the 2025 Legislative Season



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We're kicking off the 2025 legislative season with unwavering strength and passion, advocating for nurses and patients across South Carolina. This year has already brought a whirlwind of events—ranging from a rare southern snowstorm to devastating fires in California and the start of a new presidential term. It's clear that 2025 is shaping up to be a season of significant change.

In this dynamic environment, SCNA remains steadfast in our mission to champion policies that protect and advance the nursing profession while improving healthcare outcomes for all South Carolinians. Below, you'll find the 2025-2026 SCNA Legislative Agenda, your roadmap for our advocacy efforts this year. Rooted in the priorities voted on during our annual meeting, this agenda serves as our action plan, enabling us to focus on critical bills and initiatives that align with our vision.

Full Practice Authority for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)

Full Practice Authority (FPA) allows APRNs to practice to the extent of their scope under the licensure authority of the state board of nursing. Currently, APRNs may only practice through a collaborative agreement with

a physician, regardless of their education, license, or certification. Many APRNs pay monthly for agreements with physicians who often provide no oversight. In the event the physician becomes unavailable, APRNs must suspend care, limiting access to healthcare and reducing patient choice in South Carolina. Thus, creating unnecessary interruptions and delays in patient care. With FPA, APRNs will have more mobility with their careers and more opportunities to practice where they are needed most in SC communities. Patients across SC will have more options for providers and can experience more accessible, quality care (AANP, 2024). There is so much value in FPA for all nurses across SC. When nurses, at any level, are permitted to work to the full extent of their scope of practice and training, communities thrive from having more accessible care and the nursing profession can experience meaningful growth.

Protecting Nurses and other Healthcare Providers from Workplace Violence

Workplace violence among nurses and other healthcare workers is a serious issue in SC and across the country, with nurses and nursing support personnel typically experiencing the most assault. In 2023,

47.7% of nurses and 20.1% of nursing support personnel experienced assault with most violent events occurring in patient rooms (53.8%) or emergency rooms (26.3%) and adult patients committing the majority acts of violence (South Carolina Workplace Violence Collaborative, 2023). It is crucial for healthcare facilities to have workplace violence prevention programs and a zero-tolerance policy for violence in the workplace. Beyond organizational efforts, our state government can support these efforts through legislation designed to enforce penalties for assault against nurses and other healthcare workers.

Nursing and Healthcare Workforce Development

To have a thriving nurse workforce in SC, we must invest in opportunities to support workforce development and have the support of our state government in doing so. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, removing barriers to licensure, tuition reimbursement, scholarships, nurse faculty loans, and Title VIII programs, which support nursing services through education, recruitment, practice, and retention efforts (AACN, 2024).

Access to Medical Cannabis

Patients deserve to have access to treatments that can best support them in their times of need under the direction and oversight of an authorized healthcare provider, including medical cannabis. Removing the stigma associated with cannabis for medicinal purposes will require a culture shift and policy efforts to support this shift. One way we can start this shift is by referring to this form of medicine by its scientific name, Cannabis, as opposed to 'marijuana' or other common pseudonyms which have inherently negative connotations and grew from racist and classist origins (Engvik, 2023).

Remove Barriers to Health Insurance Coverage

In South Carolina, roughly 83,000 adults fall into the health insurance coverage gap, meaning their income is too high to receive Medicaid, but too low to qualify for health insurance in the marketplace or afford the high costs of privatized health insurance. Many of the South Carolinians who fall into this coverage gap work in crucial areas for our state's economy, such as construction and food services, and 57% of those in the coverage gap are apart of families with at least one worker. If they are not in the labor market, these individuals are typically in school, living with a disability, or providing caregiving services for family members. The coverage gap in SC also contributes to racial and ethnic disparities, with 52% of individuals in the gap being people of color (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2024). Closing the health insurance coverage gap in SC can improve patient outcomes, increase health care access, reduce racial disparities, reduce uncompensated care (i.e. saving the state and taxpayer money), and keep rural hospitals open.

Conclusion

The South Carolina Nurses Association (SCNA) stands at the forefront of advocacy, championing safe, effective health-care and the advancement of the nursing profession. We are unwavering in our commitment to fostering environments that prioritize safety, quality, and well-being—not only for nurses but for all health-care professionals and the patients they serve across South Carolina.

Our annual policy agenda serves as a powerful roadmap for our advocacy efforts, strategically guiding us as we address the most pressing healthcare challenges and opportunities in our state. Yet, this agenda is just the beginning. Advocacy is dynamic, and as new challenges arise, SCNA remains agile and determined to identify and seize opportunities to elevate healthcare and support the health and resilience of nurses and patients alike.

Together, we have the power to make meaningful change. Whether it's addressing workplace violence, securing full practice authority for nurse practitioners, or advocating for equitable access to care, our efforts will leave a lasting impact. Your

voice, your passion, and your dedication fuel this journey, and we are honored to have you with us.

Now is the time to unite, advocate boldly, and make a difference for the future of nursing and healthcare in South Carolina. Together, we will achieve extraordinary things. Let's get to work—let's advocate! ■

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