

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR  
**Pain Management**  
  
**Nursing**

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Dear Governor Gregoire,

The American Society for Pain Management Nursing believes that if you sign into law HB 2876, it will not only fail to deter prescription drug abuse, but will penalize patients who can function and enjoy life because of the treatments prescribed by their health care professionals. The bill will produce an ethical dilemma for those health care professionals who prescribe medications for legitimate patients. American Society for Pain Management Nursing stands with other professional organizations to promote objective and fair-minded legislation to prevent prescription drug abuse while promoting best practices for pain management. In the interest of the public health, it is critical that policy makers and health professionals work together to create balanced solutions to prevent prescription drug abuse while supporting and protecting treatment for chronic persistent pain.

As advocates for thousands of chronic pain sufferers in Washington, nurse pain experts warn that requiring these patients to be treated by one of only 15 pain specialists in the entire state will create long waits and delayed treatments, having little if any impact on prescription abuse while increasing pain and suffering. Why should a young woman who suffers from debilitating arthritis have to give up her job and stop caring for her small children because the pain medicine required to treat her pain and legitimately prescribed by her doctor will no longer be available? She will suffer while the criminal who forges prescriptions or doctor shops will go on as usual. Is this good healthcare? Is this humane? Is this fiscally responsible?

We stand with other professionals who argue that HB 2876 fails for several reasons:

- the number of available pain specialists is very limited (non-existent in many areas) and will result in long delays while patients suffer;
- pain specialist consultations are expensive, driving up healthcare costs;
- prescribers would be required to request a consult with a pain specialist after dosing has reached a peak rather than applying risk management at the beginning of treatment; and
- it imposes new liability concerns on physicians that will discourage doctors from treating pain.

This bill will leave many patients in unnecessary pain and put caring physicians and health care providers who try to treat their patients at risk of criminal charges. The community will also suffer the economic burden because of lost wages from increased disability, inadequate control of prescription drug abuse and an increased burden on the healthcare system.

We support Prescription Monitoring Programs that provide information to prescribers to better identify criminals who may be abusing drugs. Prescription Monitoring Programs allow prescribers to treat legitimate patients while providing tools to identify criminals who “doctor-

shop” to illegally obtain prescriptions. Clearly, it is important that Washington physicians, nurse practitioners and all other prescribers know the best way to prescribe controlled substances and have ready access to prescription management tools that make a difference. This, however, requires education and investment in programs like a Prescription Monitoring Program rather than laws that simply restrict practice.

Washington must find that balance without harming legitimate pain sufferers.

Governor, you must veto this bill to ensure that patient care is dictated by best practices, not criminal behavior. We support education aimed at prescribers, as well as, safe risk management strategies targeting the public. Effective solutions to prescription drug abuse are critical to public health, but HB 2876 is a false “fix” at the expense of sound public health policy and patients in pain.

Respectfully,

Theresa Grimes, MN, RN-BC, FNP-BC, CCRN

President, American Society for Pain Management Nursing