October 3, 2013

The Honorable Eric Shinseki
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
801 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shinseki:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), I write to commend the Veterans Administration’s work surrounding the Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA) Nursing Handbook 1180.03 to recognize Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) as Licensed Independent Practitioners in all VHA facilities. Serving as the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, AACN represents over 740 nursing schools that educate over 400,000 students, and employ over 16,000 nurse faculty and researchers. Given that AACN’s membership educates the next generation of APRNs, we applaud the Department’s efforts to support their practice and help ensure our nation’s Veterans receive access to high quality healthcare services in a timely manner.

Our member schools provide rigorous educational preparation for APRNs, which include nurse practitioners; certified registered nurse anesthetists; certified nurse-midwives; and clinical nurse specialists. With over 700 APRN programs educating nearly 60,500 students, a massive cadre of graduates will seek opportunities to utilize the full breadth of their skills. By amending the Nursing Handbook to include APRNs as Licensed Independent Practitioners, the VHA will become an even more attractive environment for advanced nursing practice. Moreover, this recommendation will allow the VHA to maximize the utilization of these clinicians to provide high-quality, cost-effective care for our nation’s Veterans. Decades of empirical evidence and the recent Institute of Medicine report on the Future of Nursing, which calls for APRNs to practice to their full scope of practice, support your bold and timely proposal.

AACN supports the VHA’s recommended modification to include APRNs as Licensed Independent Practitioners in the VHA’s Nursing Handbook, and recognizes this effort is monumental to the nursing profession. If our association can be of any assistance to you or your staff, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Suzanne Miyamoto, Director of Government Affairs and Health Policy, at Smiyamot@aacn.nche.edu or 202-463-6930 ext. 247.

Sincerely,

Jane Kirschling, PhD, RN, FAAN
President