

ALLOW HOSPICE LPNS TO PRONOUNCE DEATH



BACKGROUND

Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) provide intimate, hands-on-care for hospice patients across the Commonwealth. They provide critical care to these patients throughout their experience in hospice, but are unable to pronounce a patient's death. The Vital Statistics Law of 1953 currently limits the ability to pronounce death to professional nurses (RNs), medical doctors, physician assistants and coroners.

The ability to pronounce a hospice patient's death should not be limited in this way. Hospices across the state face workforce shortages and must allocate finite resources to best serve their patients. LPNs are more than qualified to perform this function, allowing hospices to allocate resources as deemed most appropriate for patient care.

SUPPORTING FACTS

- LPNs are not prohibited from pronouncing death in the applicable scope of practice law and are competent to serve this function.
- Virginia enacted legislation in 2022 to permit hospice nurses to pronounce death for hospice patients.

CALL TO ACTION

Support legislation that would allow hospice LPNs to make death pronouncements for their patients. This will help to alleviate workforce strains and allow agencies to allocate care and resources to best meet the needs of their patients and families.



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