2026 Legislative Session: Advancing Policy, Elevating Nursing, Transforming Care

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We entered the second year of South Carolina's two-year legislative session with renewed strength, focused purpose, and unwavering passion for the nurses and patients we serve across our state. The possibilities before us in 2026 are both meaningful and measurable, and the voice of nursing has never been more essential in shaping the future of healthcare in South Carolina.

Below is the 2025–2026 South Carolina Nurses Association (SCNA) Legislative Agenda, which continues to guide our advocacy throughout this legislative season. Our legislative priorities (SCNA, 2024), voted on during Membership Assembly, serve as the foundation for this work, while the annual agenda functions as a strategic action plan, allowing us to respond with clarity and intention to legislation introduced each year.

Full Practice Authority for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs)

Full Practice Authority (FPA) allows APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education, licensure, and certification under the authority of the state board of nursing. Currently, APRNs in South Carolina must maintain a collaborative agreement with a physician regardless of experience or clinical expertise. Many APRNs pay monthly fees for agreements that may provide little to no clinical oversight, and when a collaborating physician becomes unavailable, patient care can be delayed or suspended, limiting access and reducing patient choice.

Granting FPA would increase provider mobility, expand access to care in underserved communities, and strengthen healthcare delivery statewide. Patients across South Carolina would benefit from more timely, high-quality, and accessible care (AANP, 2024). When nurses at every level are empowered to practice to the full scope of their preparation, communities thrive and the profession grows in both impact and sustainability.

Protecting Nurses and Healthcare Providers from Workplace Violence

Workplace violence remains a critical issue in South Carolina and across the nation, disproportionately affecting nurses and nursing support personnel. In 2023, 47.7% of nurses and 20.1% of nursing support personnel experienced assault, with most incidents occurring in patient rooms (53.8%) and emergency departments (26.3%), and the majority of perpetrators being adult patients (South Carolina Workplace Violence Collaborative, 2023).

Healthcare organizations must maintain comprehensive prevention programs and zero-tolerance policies, but meaningful change also requires legislative action. Strengthening laws that protect healthcare workers and enforce penalties for assault is essential to ensuring safe environments where nurses can provide care without fear.

Nursing and Healthcare Workforce Development

A thriving nursing workforce requires sustained investment and strong public policy support. Workforce development strategies include reducing barriers to licensure, expanding tuition reimbursement and scholarships, supporting nurse faculty loan programs, and strengthening Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs, which fund education, recruitment, practice, and retention initiatives (AACN, 2024).

Strategic investment in the nursing pipeline is not optional; it is fundamental to the health of South Carolina's communities and healthcare systems.

Sustaining the South Carolina BOLD Loan Repayment Program

An essential component of workforce development in South Carolina is the continued funding of the South Carolina BOLD (Better

The Impact on Patient Care

These generational subcultures significantly impact patient care delivery. Older nurses may spend more time at the bedside, engaging in conversation and building relationships, while younger nurses might focus on efficient task completion and data collection. Neither approach is inherently superior, but the lack of understanding between these styles can create inconsistent patient experiences.

Younger healthcare workers may excel at using technology to monitor patient conditions and coordinate care across multiple providers, but they might miss the subtle cues that experienced nurses pick up through years of hands-on practice. Conversely, experienced staff may provide exceptional emotional support and clinical intuition but struggle to leverage technological tools that could enhance their effectiveness.

Building Bridges Across the Divide

Successfully managing these generational subcultures requires intentional strategies that honor the strengths of each group while addressing their respective limitations. Healthcare organizations are finding success through reverse mentoring programs, where younger staff teach technology skills to older colleagues, while experienced professionals share clinical wisdom and patient care expertise with newer graduates.

Cross-generational teams that deliberately pair members from different generations have shown improved patient outcomes and job satisfaction. These partnerships allow for knowledge transfer in both directions, with younger workers learning the nuances of patient assessment and care planning, while older staff become more comfortable with technological tools.

Recommendations for Healthcare Leaders

Healthcare administrators and nurse managers must recognize that these generational differences represent valuable diversity rather than obstacles to overcome. Successful integration requires flexible policies that accommodate different learning styles, communication preferences, and work approaches.

Professional development programs should offer multiple formats, from traditional classroom settings to online modules and hands-on workshops. Communication protocols should include both formal reporting structures and informal digital channels. Most importantly, organizations should foster mutual respect and understanding between generations, emphasizing that each brings unique and valuable perspectives to patient care.

Looking Forward

As healthcare continues to evolve rapidly, the ability to bridge generational divides will become increasingly critical. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how quickly healthcare settings must adapt, requiring both technological innovation and human resilience. Organizations that successfully integrate the wisdom of experience with the energy of innovation will be best positioned to provide exceptional patient care while maintaining a satisfied, collaborative workforce.

The future of healthcare depends not on choosing between generational approaches, but on creating environments where different generations can learn from each other, leveraging their unique strengths to improve patient outcomes and advance the profession. By recognizing and respecting these generational subcultures while working to bridge their differences, healthcare organizations can transform potential conflicts into powerful collaborations that benefit providers, patients, and the broader healthcare system.

The challenge ahead lies not in eliminating generational differences, but in harnessing them as complementary forces that strengthen the fabric of healthcare delivery. When experienced wisdom meets innovative energy, and traditional values blend with modern capabilities, healthcare achieves its highest potential for healing and service. ■

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accolades reflect the foundation's growing influence and the value stakeholders place on its work.

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