

tor Mark Longshore presented a synopsis of testimony provided by CNA in support or opposition of 2026 bills. Following the detailed report, anticipated elements of the 2027 Legislative Session, under the leadership of Colorado's next Governor, were announced. The Session will commence on January 11, 2027, and is likely to focus on AI, Medicaid restructuring, and of course the Sunset of the Nurse Practice Act on September 1, 2027.

GAPP will continue to rely on research

provided by voting members and others to inform the Committee on bills for discussion in the 2027 Session.

CNA will continue to follow the progress of the Colorado Healthcare Payment System Analysis, or HPSA (SB25-045) throughout the remainder of this calendar year and collaborate on the Nurse Practice Act, which will be introduced in the 2027 Legislative Session.

2026 Bills can be found on the "Bill Tracker" link under the Advocacy tab on

the CNA homepage (www.coloradonurses.org). This list of priority bills cites the position taken by CNA ("Support, Oppose, or Monitor") and how the bills finished in the 2026 Legislative Session.

GAPP, an official committee of CNA, will meet exclusively online the second Wednesday of each month through December, from 6:15 to 8 PM. Access the registration details and more information about GAPP by going to: <https://www.coloradonurses.org/gapp/>. ■

Thinking About Advancing Your Nursing Career?

Signs You May Be Ready to Earn Your Master's Degree in Nursing

Krista Estes DNP, FNP-BC

Going back to school for your master's degree is a big decision. And not one to make lightly. It's worth taking real stock of where you are professionally and personally before you take the leap. Here are some signs that the timing might be right.

Work Is Starting to Feel Routine

This one sneaks up on people. You worked hard to feel confident in your role, and now that you're there, something feels like it's missing. You're curious about the why behind clinical decisions. You want more say in solving patient care problems. You're not just doing your job well; you want to do more.

That sense of wanting to grow beyond your current role is often the clearest sign you're ready.

Have a Good Balance

The decision to go back to school requires a lot of reflection and consideration of whether it fits with your current lifestyle. You should be in a place where you can balance work and life and everything else that goes along with earning a master's degree. Do you have a support system? Can you carve out consistent time to study? You don't need a perfect schedule,

but you do need enough margin to show up for the program and give it what it requires. Reflect and understand how your life might change while earning a degree.

Know What Going Back to School Looks Like

It's also worth knowing that graduate school feels different from your undergraduate experience. The learning is more self-directed — you're building on what you already know, and the expectation is that you drive your own growth. Time management, accountability, and intellectual curiosity aren't just nice to have; they're essential.

Think About Your RN Experience

You might hear someone say you need to be a registered nurse for two to three years before going back to school, but it's different for everyone. It's not just about how long you've practiced; time alone doesn't define expertise. What matters just as much is the depth and breadth of your experience: the diversity of patients you've cared for, the complexity of situations you've faced, and the clinical judgment you've refined along the way.

I went back to school after one year

of working, but it was because, prior to nursing school, I knew I wanted to be a nurse practitioner. While I was working, I worked in a surgical trauma intensive care unit and as a float nurse, so I was exposed to many different areas of a hospital. In my case, that experience mattered more than the number of years on paper.

If you have the opportunity to work in a specialty area that genuinely interests you before returning to school, take it. It can help you identify which master's specialty to pursue — and just as usefully, which ones aren't for you.

Ask Questions

Advanced Practice Nursing has many specialties, so if you have an interest in returning to school, talk to people in the role you want to see yourself in. Shadow several people to see how they work, and if you're interested in different specialties, ask them questions. Why did you choose to work with adults? Why do you like primary care? Why do you love your job? What are some challenges you see in your role?

Reach out to your school of choice and talk to academic counselors or specialty directors to get a good feel for the program and what your career could look like

after graduation. A good fit between you and a program makes a real difference in your experience and your outcomes.

Return to School for the Right Reasons

When I went back to school, I was intellectually driven and really wanted to learn more, be a critical thinker, and grow. There are things we see in people applying to the college's master's programs, no matter how many years of experience they have. These attributes would contribute to your success as a student.

Feeling burnt out at work or wanting a better schedule aren't reasons to earn a master's degree. Or if you're feeling pressure from people saying 'You should be an

FNP' and your heart just isn't in it, don't feel obligated to go back to school.

Signs You May Need to Hit Pause

There are some signs you may not be ready to go back to school yet – and that's okay. If you're feeling overwhelmed by work or still lacking confidence in your decision-making, wait until you feel more comfortable. You also might realize you don't have the time to devote to studying. It's important that you can recognize these signs and wait to return to school.

And If You're Not Ready Yet – That's Okay

If you're still building confidence in your clinical decision-making, feeling stretched

thin at work, or unsure you have the bandwidth, it's okay to wait. Recognizing that now is actually a sign of the kind of self-awareness that will serve you well when you do go back.

There's no universal right time. There's just the right time for you. ■

About the author: Dr. Krista Estes serves as the Assistant Dean of Master's Programs and is an Associate Professor at the University of Colorado Anschutz College of Nursing. She actively practices as a Family Nurse Practitioner and previously held the role of Family Nurse Practitioner Specialty Director for eight years.

Legendary Leader: Louie Croft Boyd

Carol OMeara, CNF Secretary

As nurses in Colorado are preparing for the Sunset of the Nurse Practice Act in 2027, this quarter we honor Louie Croft Boyd, the first licensed nurse in Colorado. She dedicated her life to the nursing profession and to raising standards for nursing. As a teenager, she was a suffragette and newspaper journalist. She came to Colorado at age 21 and enrolled in the Colorado Training School for Nurses at City Hospital, later known as Denver General and now known as Denver Health. After graduating in 1899, she completed post graduate training and earned a teaching certificate in Chicago and returned to Denver to teach at Denver General. During her career she served as superintendent of nursing at Denver General, St. Luke's and Rio Grand Hospitals in Colorado and Wyoming General in Rock Springs, Wyoming, seeking roles where she could



affect working conditions and educational standards

In 1904, Louie helped found the Colorado State Trained Nurses Association, now Colorado Nurses Association, and was hired as the association's first Lobbyist. She wrote what was to become HB32 and SB9, introduced to the Colorado General Assembly to create legal licensure for nurses. Upon passage of the bill in 1905, creating the State Board of Nursing Examiners, Louie applied for and became the first licensed nurse in Colorado. She later served on the State Board of Nurse Examiners.

Louie Croft Boyd was posthumously inducted into the Colorado Nurses Association Hall of Fame, and the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame. A powerful advocate for nursing in Colorado, she is a true Legendary Leader. ■