January 30, 2018

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
Office of the Secretary
The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the nation’s over 52,000 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs), the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA) wishes to congratulate you on your confirmation as the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We look forward to working with you and your staff to help attain our common goals of increasing access to healthcare, advancing healthcare reform and innovation, making healthcare more affordable and improving the quality of the care available for all Americans. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) are advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who personally administer more than 43 million anesthetics to patients each year in the United States. CRNAs provide every aspect of the delivery of anesthesia services and also provide acute, chronic, and interventional pain management services.

CRNAs and the AANA have enjoyed a positive working relationship with HHS, particularly with regard to the Medicare program. Currently HHS has authority to implement Provider Nondiscrimination provisions, we are interested in continuing to work on this issue with you. This provision if meaningfully implemented would help to increase competition in the health care marketplace, increase access, lower costs while maintaining the highest quality care.

Though much progress has been made, more work remains toward our goal of implementing the recommendations of the National Academy of Medicine report The Future of Nursing and expanding patient access to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare through eliminating unnecessary regulatory barriers to the use of CRNAs and other advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) and allowing them to practice to the full extent of their education, training, and certification.

The AANA has long supported endeavors to improve quality health care and believe engaging CRNAs will help the agency meet its goals of delivering high quality and cost-effective health care. We ask that you include our leadership in your efforts moving forward. We look forward to becoming more engaged in meaningful efforts to improve health care delivery in America. CRNAs are poised to help innovate across the delivery spectrum in areas such as:

- utilizing a patient-centered, multidisciplinary, multimodal treatment approach to pain management may reduce the reliance on opioids as a primary pain management modality;
- collaborating with the patient and the interdisciplinary team on a comprehensive plan for pain relief known as enhanced recovery after surgery;
assuring that rural America has access to critical anesthesia services by removing regulatory barriers to CRNA practice and allowing CRNAs to practice to the full extent of their scope, licensure and training; and

helping to implement innovative, cost-effective models in anesthesia delivery such as non-medically directed anesthesia services performed by a CRNA.

During this time of ongoing change in the health arena, we would love the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the valuable role CRNAs can play in improving delivery of the highest quality health care. Please know that we are at your service, so please feel free to contact AANA Senior Director of Federal Government Affairs, Ralph Kohl, at 202-484-8400, rkohl@aanadc.com.

Sincerely,

Bruce A. Weiner, DNP, MSNA, CRNA
AANA President