

Ohio House Health Committee  
Proponent Testimony – HB 177  
June 18, 2019

Dear Chairman Merrin, Vice Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the Health Committee. It is my pleasure to share with you why I support Ohio H.B. 177. I am a certified family nurse practitioner.

This legislation seeks to modernize laws allowing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) to practice to the full extent of their education, training and certification. HB 177 will serve to expand access to vital health care services for Ohioans across the state by eliminating the requirement that Certified Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, and Clinical Nurse Specialists sign a contract or a “mandatory collaboration agreement,” with physicians in order to practice in Ohio. It is becoming increasingly difficult for APRNs to find a physician to collaborate with them. I want to emphasize that this is collaboration and **not** direct supervision.

Today, more than 1.5 million Ohioans lack necessary access to vital primary care services. In fact, the federal government has designated 159 healthcare provider shortage areas across the state. This means that just 55% of patient need is met. APRNs offer a high-quality, accessible, and affordable solution to the state’s primary care access problem.

I myself had issues finding a physician to sign my Standard Care Arrangement (SCA). I had a thriving practice in rural Ohio and when my physician collaborator decided to leave the practice, it put my primary care practice immediately in a bind and at risk of closing. At first, I was thankful for passage of HB 216 over two General Assemblies ago because this provided our organization 120 days “buffer period” to find a new collaborator before we had

to close our practice. Prior to passage of HB 216, our patients would have been without their primary care provider that very same day the physician left. Thankfully, at the time the physician left, the organization had 120 days to find a new collaborator, but that time proved to be ineffective. After many meetings and countless roadblocks, the 120 days was nearing an end and we did not have a new SCA, they had not found a new physician collaborator for the business. The organization's patients would need to find a new primary care provider and all the APRNs needed to find a new job.

I had to move my practice to West Virginia. Thankfully, West Virginia modernized their laws and they had removed the regulation that required a physician contract, they had retired the regulation that required an APRN to obtain a SCA. So, today, while I live in Ohio, I MUST work in West Virginia because Ohio is so restrictive and in Ohio I must sign a contract with a physician in order to practice as an Advanced Practice Nurse. Though I still live in Ohio and I am the local Ohio chapter leader for my statewide organization, every morning, I get into my car and cross the Newell Bridge and head into West Virginia to practice and care for patients. Many of my patients have followed me to West Virginia because of their inability to find a new healthcare provider nearby in Ohio.

Ohio has a severe primary care provider shortage, especially in rural areas. I wanted to practice in this underserved area and I searched for a physician collaborator for four months and during that time, I practiced without a signed physician contract. I practiced without the mandatory collaboration and I provided high quality healthcare to my patients; many of whom chose to follow me to a different state in order for me to continue to care for them.

Ohio APRNs have excellent outcomes and our costs are low. Our patients love us and research demonstrates once they see an APRN; they choose to continue to see an APRN.

Allow Ohio citizens to have a choice in their health provider. I was unable to find a collaborating physician and Ohio law forced me to close my practice and move to another state – my patients could no longer choose to see me in Ohio. This law is not only bad for patient care but it is bad for business. This regulation, this contract, is simply a piece of paper. It does not change how I collaborate or how I practice on a day to day basis.

Passage of HB 177 does not increase or change my scope. What I do today is what I will do tomorrow and what I do tomorrow, I am already doing today. This meaningless piece of paper may make everyone feel warm and cozy, but the only purpose it serves is to limit patient choice and patient access to quality healthcare.

Help us improve healthcare in Ohio so we can change our poor rating.

Help us provide patients with the right to choose their healthcare provider.

Help us remove the bureaucracy that supports this unnecessary regulation.

I am living in Ohio

I am advocating in Ohio

I am working in West Virginia

Let's get with the times – let's join the 27 other states and come up to the National Standard. Sub-par care needs to stop in the Great State of Ohio. Vote Yes on 177

Sincerely,

Natalie Holden