

June 17, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and Members of the House Health Committee:

We, the undersigned, support H.B. 177 and urge its immediate passage. Increasing access to healthcare for Ohio's patients should be a top priority for our legislators.

The 2018 U.S. News & World Report's Best State Rankings placed Ohio 36th in the nation among states in terms of healthcare access, health quality, and public health. Looking at federal government and Kaiser Family Foundation data, Ohio is home to over 159 areas designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) lacking healthcare providers. With nearly 1.5 million Ohioans living in these shortage areas, it's time to have a real discussion about access to healthcare in our state.

In the last decade, we have lost 12% of our physicians in rural areas of the state, all while the need for primary care has increased significantly. During that same time period, our physician workforce statewide only grew at a rate of 2%, compared to the nearly 227% growth in the advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) field.

Ohio's 16,000 APRNs are qualified to fill the need in these shortage areas but are limited by the state's requirement that an APRN sign a contract or "standard care arrangement" (SCA) with physicians in order to practice in Ohio. This amounts to little more than a fee APRNs pay to a physician in order to practice.

Twenty-eight states have already removed such mandatory contracts as a requirement for certified APRNs to provide the healthcare services they are educationally prepared to provide. As a result, even greater numbers of APRNs are moving to those states to deliver healthcare services in rural and underserved communities.

We urge the passage of H.B. 177, which is a no cost, no delay solution to increasing access to high-quality, accessible healthcare for all Ohioans.

Sincerely,

