

January 28, 2020

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

We, the undersigned, support Substitute House Bill 177 (Sub. 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 2019 U.S. News & World Report's Best State Rankings placed Ohio 35th in the nation among states in terms of healthcare access, health quality and public health. According to 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 an HPSA, it's time to have a real discussion about how to solve the healthcare access problem in our state.

Ohio's 17,000 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 a physician in order to practice. The SCA amounts to little more than a fee APRNs pay to a physician in order to practice. Sub. H.B. 177 will allow an APRN who has completed 2,000 clinical hours to opt out of signing an SCA.

The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor and Treasury and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a report in December 2018, recommending states allow non-physicians (APRNs) to independently treat patients. Additionally, the Trump administration recently issued an executive order directing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to modernize the Medicare and Medicaid programs to enable APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education, licensure and clinical training. And just this month, the FTC provided a strong endorsement of Sub. H.B. 177, urging the Ohio legislature to approve the measure.

Twenty-eight states have already updated their laws to allow certified APRNs to provide the healthcare services they are educationally prepared and licensed 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 Sub. H.B. 177, which is a no-cost, no-delay solution to increasing access to high-quality, accessible healthcare for all Ohioans.

Sincerely,

