

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 177  
THE HOUSE HEALTH COMMITTEE

APRIL 30, 2019

BARBARA A. SYKES, AARP OHIO

Thank you Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Health committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony expressing AARP Ohio's support of House Bill 177.

I am Barbara A. Sykes and I serve as the State Director in Ohio for AARP. As you are aware, AARP, with 1.5 million members in Ohio, is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, nationwide organization that helps empower people to choose how they live as they age, strengthens communities, and fights for the issues that matter most to families, such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse.

Reliable access to quality health care is a top priority for AARP members in Ohio. We believe consumers should be able to get health care from qualified health care professionals of their choice, including nurse practitioners – APRNs who typically practice primary care – when and where they need it. Yet, Ohio's laws limit consumers' ability to fully benefit from the care APRNs provide.

AARP is supportive of HB 177 which would remove restrictive and outdated barriers that prevent people from accessing the full range of care provided by Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs).

AARP believes that it is in the consumers' best interest for Ohio to update health care rules and eliminate unnecessary physician contracts. These contracts can delay access to care, especially in areas where there is a lack of available primary care physicians with whom the nurse can contract. Delays in care hurt consumers and make it harder for older residents and people with physical disabilities to age in place. The vast majority of state residents want to live independently as they age, and need access to routine care in a variety of settings so they can remain at home. Nurse practitioners can provide flexibility by serving in a wide variety of settings, including community health centers, medical offices and in the home.

Not only would HB 177 help patients by breaking down the barrier that currently prevents this type of choice, but it will also help meet a provider need in the state. Ohio faces a shortage of primary care providers, especially in our underserved, rural communities. Consider the numbers:

- Ohio has 153 primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas.<sup>1</sup>
- All but 7 of Ohio's 88 counties have partial or full designation as primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas.<sup>2</sup>
- The primary care health professional shortage areas include approximately 1,396,882 patients in our state.<sup>3</sup>

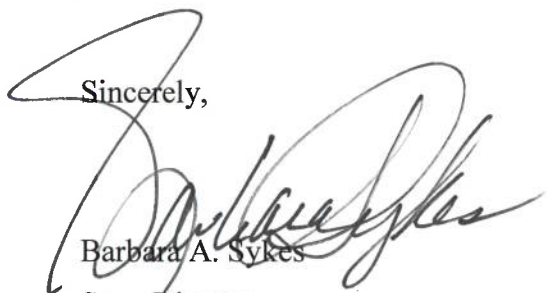
Ohio's 5,914 nurse practitioners<sup>4</sup> can be part of the solution to our provider shortage.

We also believe that giving consumers the choice to directly access APRNs will help older adults and support family caregivers. In Ohio, 1,480,000 (nearly 1.5 million) residents are family caregivers providing an estimated \$16.5 billion of care annually. Family caregivers too often bear the brunt of providing and overseeing the care of a loved one.

The shortage of primary care physicians in rural and underserved communities is hitting older consumer hard. Older adults frequently lack the ability and resources to get to their appointments because of mobility issues, long travel distances to a provider and wait times for appointments. This puts their health at risk and adds stress to family caregivers. It's time that Ohioans have access to the full range of skills that APRNs, clinicians with advanced degrees and certified to provide a range of care.

The Buckeye state has the opportunity to join 22 other states, the District of Columbia, and the Veteran's Administration that have revised outdated and overregulated health care rules. AARP urges state lawmakers to support the proposed legislation and give all residents access to high-quality nurse practitioners for primary care services they want and deserve. Red tape doesn't heal, APRNs do.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Sykes

State Director  
AARP Ohio

---

<sup>1</sup> Health Resources & Services Administration. <https://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/topics/shortageareas.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Health Resources & Services Administration. <https://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/topics/shortageareas.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) (2017), available at: <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?state=OH>

<sup>4</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, Total Number of Nurse Practitioners. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/total-number-of-nurse-practitioners/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>