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**Written Testimony on Senate Bill 81**  
**House Health Provider Services Committee**  
**April 16, 2024**  
**Kelsey Bergfeld, Associate State Director, Outreach & Advocacy**  
**AARP Ohio**

Good afternoon, Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and distinguished members of the House Health Provider Services Committee.

My name is Kelsey Bergfeld, and I serve as an Associate State Director for AARP Ohio. 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, livable communities, and protection from financial abuse.

**AARP would like to express our support for Senate Bill 81 which would allow physician assistants, advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), and other advanced practice providers, to sign documents relating to a patient’s admission, treatment, or discharge.**

Increasing reliable access to quality health care is a top priority for AARP members in Ohio. We believe patients 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.

Senate Bill 81 would improve some access to care by allowing advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants, under a collaborative agreement or supervised by a physician in the same facility, to sign admittance and discharge papers for patients in mental health hospitals or other facilities. By helping advanced practice providers admit and treat patients more expeditiously, this bill will help avoid delays in care that hurt consumers and add stress to family caregivers who provide and oversee the care of a loved one.

While this is a step in the right direction to help improve people’s access to care and support for families, this bill is quite incremental. Ohio faces a shortage of primary care providers, especially in our underserved, rural communities. Consider the numbers:



- Ohio has 189 primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas.<sup>1</sup>
- The primary care health professional shortage areas include approximately 2,401,969 patients in our state.<sup>2</sup>

Nurse practitioners can help fill the gap, providing quality health care locally for patients throughout the state—from small towns to urban areas. 97 million people in 27 states and the District of Columbia have better access to care because their policymakers removed legal barriers that prevented nurse practitioners from providing care to the full extent of their education and training.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to supporting Senate Bill 81, AARP asks this committee to consider modernizing outdated rules to let nurse practitioners do their job and stem the flow of trained health care professionals moving to other states.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of AARP. Thank you for your time, and please feel free to direct any questions to me at [kbergfeld@aarp.org](mailto:kbergfeld@aarp.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) (2023) <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?state=OH>

<sup>2</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) (2023) <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/primary-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?state=OH>

<sup>3</sup> Center to Champion Nursing in America: Campaign for Action <https://campaignforaction.org/issue/improving-access-to-care/>