

Study finds nurse practitioners improve health care access but considers them second-class

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STUDY FINDS NURSE PRACTITIONERS IMPROVE HEALTH CARE ACCESS, BUT NEW JERSEY CONSIDERS THEM SECOND-CLASS

Press Release – A study published in the Journal of Health Economics last month found that giving advanced practice nurse routine checkups, improves care, and decreases emergency room and ambulatory needs.

Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz has sponsored bills and advocated for years to allow APNs to practice to the full extent of their



“Advanced practice nurses provide a significant portion of primary care in New Jersey, but the extent of their education and training is restricted in the state,” said Munoz. “This is a significant barrier to primary care and much needed psychiatric care if the advanced practice nurses were allowed to practice to the full extent of their license.”

In New Jersey, APNs, which include nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and nurse anesthetists, can prescribe medication but must sign a contract with a physician to prescribe medication. In many states, APNs are prohibited from practicing and limiting competition, according to the Federal Trade Commission, which has warned of the consequences for patients if the contract suddenly ends with the physician.

The shortfall in primary care physicians in New Jersey is expected to be exacerbated by the projected retirement of 10,000 physicians expected to be practicing in the state by that time, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration.

“Fortunately, increasing access to health care is a bipartisan issue,” said Munoz. “We hope that in the next month the legislature will pass legislation to remove joint protocol and allow APNs to practice to the full extent of their license.”

Munoz sponsors two bills that would give advanced practice nurses in New Jersey the authority to prescribe medication without the joint protocol. The first bill (A3012) would amend the Access to Health Care Act, allows nurses to prescribe medication without the joint protocol, and the second (A3013) authorizes the use of telemedicine for the treatment of mental health disorders.

“We have more people seeking access to health care than ever before,” concluded Munoz. “We need to make sure that health care is accessible and available to provide this care, and allowing them to practice to the full extent of their license will allow us to improve the quality of care for all New Jerseyans.”

The study analyzed changes in health care results after nurse practitioners were allowed to prescribe medication in eight states. The study found a 11.6 percent reduction in emergency room visits, and an 8.6 percent increase in patients who rated their health care as excellent.

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