

**Letter: Pa. should back reform for nurse practitioners**

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Pennsylvania faces a shortage of health care providers and nurse practitioners are ready to help. NPs are highly trained, with a master's or doctorate degree, and are nationally certified. Primary care is the foundation of our scope of practice and training, with a focus on prevention and wellness.

But state law requires NPs to enter into business contracts called "collaborative agreements," with at least two physicians, in order to practice. This law increases the cost of health care and limits access to care. Twenty-two states do not require these contracts. It is time for Pennsylvania joins them.

Recently the Pennsylvania Medical Society stated the health care status quo was good enough ("Keep the connection between nurse practitioners, doctors," Dec. 4). They said that without the contracts, NPs would refuse to collaborate with physicians. This is simply not true. NPs in every state work with physicians in all health care settings, with or without the contracts. Collaboration in the true sense of the word means to work together toward a common goal. NPs will continue to collaborate with all members of the health care team to serve patients regardless of the contracts.

AARP Pennsylvania endorsed reform because it means more caregivers to serve elderly patients. The Hospital Association of Pennsylvania states reform will improve care. The Pennsylvania Rural Health Association wants to increase health care access. The Commonwealth Foundation says it would lower costs for patients and taxpayers.

Physician trade associations are all alone in opposing this reform. But the Pennsylvania Medical Society is right about one thing, collaboration is essential for quality health care. That is why I invite them to collaborate with every other health care stakeholder in both parties, who support it. It will increase access to cost-effective, quality health care in the Lehigh Valley and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Kathleen Gray

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