

**Letter: Public says no to 'SkimpCare' bill**

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An op-ed published in the April 6 edition by Pennsylvania Senator Camera Bartolotta suggests that eliminating a significant patient safety net would be good for Pennsylvania patients. Physicians believe this thought process is flawed and it's clear the public does not want with this type of SkimpCare.

At issue is an important relationship between a physician and a nurse practitioner called the collaborative agreement. In a nutshell, it allows a nurse practitioner to treat a patient to the full extent of their education and training. More importantly, if a patient's clinical needs extend beyond a nurse's ability, a medical doctor is immediately available -- as a SAFETY-NET -- for those very complex patients.

If nurses have their way, this critical patient safety net would disappear, dismantling patient care teams by creating SkimpCare, a more fragmented and less coordinated form of health care in Pennsylvania.

But the public is not that naive. A recent statewide poll commissioned by the Pennsylvania Medical Society and conducted through Susquehanna Polling indicated nearly 80 percent of Pennsylvania adult patients want nurse practitioners to be under the supervision of doctors when delivering medical care to patients.

Nurses argue that the SkimpCare bill would be good for Pennsylvania because "patients may reach a point in the near future when they are forced to travel an hour or more just to see a doctor." This scare tactic doesn't hold up to the facts. Another poll of adult Pennsylvania patients found that 85 percent of Pennsylvanians drive 15 miles or less to see a primary care doctor. Only two percent travel more than 30 miles.

Furthermore, states that have chosen this model of health care delivery continue to struggle with care in rural and underserved areas. Despite the nurses claims to the contrary, those states did not suddenly experience a tidal wave of nurse practitioners moving into underserved areas. It just didn't happen...and it won't happen here either.

The question our elected leaders need to ask is whether they support SkimpCare, or support protecting patient safety by keeping physicians directly involved in the care of their constituents.

The Pennsylvania Medical Society believes this SkimpCare bill removes this vital patient safety net and it is a mistake for Pennsylvania patients. Collaborative agreements between nurse practitioners and physicians serve an important role in providing the highest quality and safest patient care possible.

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