

## **Bartolotta bill expands access for nurse practitioners**

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J.D. Prose

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[http://www.timesonline.com/news/governmentandpolitics/bartolotta-bill-expands-access-for-nurse-practitioners/article\\_9b05814c-f3ba-11e6-b253-6381e8fee45a.html](http://www.timesonline.com/news/governmentandpolitics/bartolotta-bill-expands-access-for-nurse-practitioners/article_9b05814c-f3ba-11e6-b253-6381e8fee45a.html)

Republican state Sen. Camera Bartolotta has introduced a bill to expand nurse practitioners' ability to practice in Pennsylvania, which she said would help rural and underserved communities.

Nurse practitioners in Pennsylvania would be granted expanded practice authority after fulfilling certain requirements under a bill introduced by state Sen. Camera Bartolotta.

Bartolotta, R-Carroll Township, Washington County, unveiled Senate Bill 25 on Tuesday saying it would modernize current state law, remove regulatory hurdles and expand access to health care for rural communities.

"Numerous studies have shown that patient health outcomes are as good or better under the care of nurse practitioners when compared to other providers," Bartolotta said in a statement.

"Many rural communities suffer from a severe lack of health care access, forcing many patients to travel an hour or more for care," she continued. "Expanding the practice authority of (nurse practitioners) is a logical step to help break down the barriers to quality health care services."

Bartolotta's statement noted that "nearly 35 percent of Pennsylvanians live in an area or population group with inadequate primary care access."

The bill would permit advanced practice registered nurses, commonly called nurse practitioners, to practice in their field of specialty without a physician if they fulfill a three-year, 3,600-hour collaboration agreement with a physician.

Current law requires nurse practitioners to have collaboration agreements, or written business contracts, with two physicians to have a license.

Nearly 30 state senators have signed as co-sponsors for Bartolotta's bill as of Tuesday. Bartolotta's statement said the state Senate approved similar legislation in the 2015-16 session.

Support for her bill also has come from several organizations, including the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, AARP and the National Academy of Medicine.

One of the groups praising the move was the Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners (PCNP), whose president, Lorraine Bock, said nurse practitioners were grateful for the bill.

"Many families have come to rely on nurse practitioners for essential health care services, such as pediatrics, geriatrics, behavioral health, acute care and more," Bock said in a statement. "Everyone agrees that Pennsylvanians deserve the highest quality care, but current state law limits nurse practitioners' ability to provide it."

In its release, the PCNP highlighted the story of Perry Township, Greene County, resident Jeanie Roush Russell, a constituent of Bartolotta's. After the local physician retired, Russell started going to a nurse practitioner clinic and became the volunteer chairwoman of its board of directors.

The PCNP release said Russell suffered a stroke a few years later and the nurse practitioner rushed to her home on a Saturday, diagnosed Russell and provided treatment on the way to the hospital.

"I'm here today because there was a nurse practitioner a few minutes away in time of need," Russell said in the PCNP statement. "I don't want to think about what would have happened if our town didn't have that clinic. Health care access is a matter of life and death for rural people."