

Senate Backs Bill to Expand Practice of Medicine by Nurses

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The Pennsylvania Senate is backing legislation to certify nurses to practice in areas of expertise and allow them to practice medicine independently of a physician's supervision.

The bill passed 39-10 on Wednesday, and goes to the House, where a similar bill stalled last year.

Supporters say it'll improve access to health care, particularly in rural areas.

The sponsor, Republican Sen. Camera Bartolotta of Washington County, says 22 states have adopted passed similar laws. It is supported by the state's hospital association and the AARP, but opposed by the Pennsylvania Medical Society.

The medical society says there's no track record that such laws expand rural health care and that the supervision of a physician is critical when care goes beyond a nurse's education, experience and clinical ability.