

POLICY SOLUTIONS FOR THE PANDEMIC

POLICY MEMO: LIFTING RESTRICTIONS
ON NURSES TO FIGHT COVID-19
APRIL 8, 2020

The Buckeye Institute's Recommendation

Ohio should end the collaborative supervision requirement that prevents nurses from practicing to their full medical training. The COVID-19 pandemic makes this **commonsense** policy recommendation now more urgent than ever.

Background

Advanced practice registered nurses (APRN) receive additional training in nursing school to administer more medications and tests. Recently, Ohio has removed some—but not all—barriers that keep APRNs from offering all of the medical care that they are trained to provide. Unfortunately, Ohio still requires that nurses, even APRNs, only practice under physician supervision. This “collaborative supervision” requirement needlessly increases health care costs and reduces available care. Studies (**here** and **here**) have shown that primary care patients receive comparable care whether treated by doctors or qualified nurses, so Ohio’s restrictions on APRNs may be denying patients quality, necessary medical treatment during the COVID-19 crisis.

Most **other states**, including neighboring West Virginia and Kentucky, already have removed collaborative supervision restrictions. Ohio’s House Bill 177 would let Ohio join them. Until the General Assembly enacts H.B. 177, however, Ohio should suspend the collaborative supervision rule during the pandemic for any APRNs who are not within 50 miles of a collaborating physician. Such a suspension may have little effect in urban centers but could provide critical relief to patients in rural areas who do not have access to as many hospitals or doctors.

Federal studies have recognized the value that APRNs provide. President Obama’s Council of Economic Advisors **found** that increasing APRN availability improved the public’s access to health care services without detracting from the quality of care. A 2014 Federal Trade Commission **report** concluded that APRNs provide quality, safe health care, and can meet a critical public health need by treating patients in underserved areas. A more recent Trump Administration **report** explained how empowering APRNs could reduce health care costs while maintaining care quality. And the Department of Veteran Affairs has eliminated its own collaborative supervision requirement to address care provider shortages in the VA health care system.

Conclusion

The Buckeye Institute has **consistently argued** and testified that ending restrictive collaboration agreements will help patients receive more affordable health care. Now more than ever Ohio needs its advanced practice registered nurses free to practice to their full training and potential during this pandemic. Ohio should temporarily suspend collaborative supervision requirements on the way to eliminating them so that nurses can help provide the necessary medical care to those in need.