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## News Release

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### Nurse Practitioner Legislation Moves to PA Senate

The Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition (BCWAC) is pleased to announce that on May 18, 2016, the Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee of the Pennsylvania State Senate, chaired by Senator Robert Tomlinson, voted SB717 out of committee and on to a full senate vote. This vote will not take place until after the senate returns from recess on June 6. This is a vote to modernize state law for nurse practitioners (NPs) as a way to boost quality, lower costs and expand access for Pennsylvania health care, particularly in rural areas. The BCWAC has been advocating for the passage of this bill.

The bill as passed by committee includes a compromise – authored by State Senator Lisa Boscola – that would require nurse practitioners to practice for 3 years and 3,600 hours under a collaborative agreement with two physicians, as they do today. After completing this transition-to-practice period, NPs would have full practice authority and no longer be mandated to obtain these contracts. This represents the longest transition period of any state in the country, but provides a middle ground enabling broader support for the bill.

With this committee's vote, Pennsylvania is one step closer to joining the growing number of states that enable nurse practitioners to serve seniors, rural communities, and all patients to the full extent of their education and training.

The **Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition** (BCWAC) is a non-partisan coalition of more than 150 individual and 37 organization partners that serve women and girls. They educate and advocate on behalf of women to promote systemic change to achieve gender equity and economic security for all.

Organized in 2008, the Coalition from the beginning has worked on improving access to quality, affordable health care and that requires a sufficient number of health care providers in all parts of the state. The Coalition believes it is important that all certified providers are given the opportunity to practice to the full extent of their training.

As such, the Coalition has been very interested in the passage of HB765 and SB717 (Rep. Jesse Topper and Sen. Patricia Vance) that would bring necessary reforms to Pennsylvania's outdated nurse practitioner law.

**Background:**

Nurse practitioners (NPs) have graduate, advanced education, with master's degrees or doctorates and are nationally certified in their specialty areas. Among their many services, NPs order, perform and interpret diagnostic tests; diagnose and treat acute and chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, infections and injuries; prescribe medications and other treatments; and manage a patient's care. Over 100 studies have proven that NPs provide safe, high-quality health care.

Currently, in order to practice, a nurse practitioner must secure business contracts called collaborative agreements with two physicians. Researchers – including physicians and nurse practitioners alike – have proven that this mandate offers no patient health benefits. To the contrary, research shows that the mandate restricts access to care and correlates with worse patient health outcomes.

Senate Bill 717 and House Bill 765 would end this costly, arbitrary and outdated mandate and make Pennsylvania a full practice authority state. Currently, 21 states and the District of Columbia are already using full practice authority to expand access to care, especially for underserved rural areas and patients with Medicaid insurance.

Legislation like Senate Bill 717 and House Bill 765 is endorsed by experts such as the National Academy of Medicine, AARP, and the National Governor's Association.

Current law disproportionately limits access to care among underserved communities, including rural areas, urban communities and patients with Medicaid insurance.

Nurse practitioners in states with full practice authority are more likely to practice in rural areas, often where there are fewer physicians, compared to nurse practitioners in states like Pennsylvania without it.

Now that this bill is out of committee and on the Floor of the PA Senate, Coalition Partners join with the Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Coalition of Nurse Practitioners to ask all state senators and representatives to support Senate Bill 717.