



SB 323 FACT SHEET

Full Practice Authority for Nurse Practitioners

Purpose

Senate Bill 323 will allow California's over 18,000 Nurse Practitioners (NPs) to practice to the full extent of their education and training. This new law would ensure access to the health care delivery system and help the millions of Californians who now have access to coverage through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Increased coverage and quality care will also save California money over the long run.

Background on NPs

NPs are advanced practice registered nurses who have pursued higher education, a master's or doctorate degree, and certification as an NP. In order to be more competitive in today's job market, many NPs now pursue additional specialty education and training in specialties like pediatrics, geriatrics, or women's health, while many remain focused on providing primary care. NPs play an important role in the health care delivery system and provide care in a variety of settings such as hospitals, community clinics, and private practice settings including in many medically underserved communities throughout the state. NPs continue to grow with the number of NPs doubling across the United States over the past ten years. In addition, U.S. News and World Report ranked NP as the second best overall job of 2015.

Lack of Primary Care in California

California is home to the largest number of primary care physicians and NPs in the country. However, the state ranks 23rd in the number of primary care physicians per 100,000 residents. The supply of primary care physicians also varies substantially across California's counties. The number of primary care physicians actively practicing in California counties is, in too many cases, at the bottom range of, or below, the state's need. According to the American Medical Association, a range of 60 to 80 primary care physicians are needed per 100,000 in order to adequately meet the needs of the population. With just 16 out of California's 58 counties having the federally recommended ratio of physicians to residents, half of Californians live in a community where they do not have adequate access to the health care services they need.

The ACA

Under the ACA, about five million Californians have enrolled in either private insurance or Medi-Cal. There are now 12 million Medi-Cal enrollees, about one third of California's population. The newly insured will increase demand for health care from an already strained system. Furthermore, the ACA will change how care is delivered. It provides incentives for expanded and improved primary care, which may affect demand for some health care professionals more than others, and encourages the creation of team-based models of service delivery. Research indicates that health care reform will place higher skill demands on all members of the health care workforce as systems try to improve quality while limiting costs. The scale of change with health care reform is unlike anything that California has previously faced. Studies have found that persons with health insurance use more health care services than uninsured persons, particularly in primary care and preventive services. This was found in

Massachusetts, which experienced a substantial increase in demand for primary care services as a result of its 2006 health reform. Unfortunately, the latest reports show that the primary care physician shortage combined with the millions of newly insured has resulted in significant delays in seeing a doctor and crowded emergency rooms.

The case for SB 323 – Provide Trained Medical Providers

Currently, 20 states and the District of Columbia allow nurse practitioners to practice to the full extent of their scope of education, experience and expertise. While California law severely restricts the ability of NPs to practice. SB 323 would change California law.

Californians deserve access to high quality primary care offered by a range of safe, efficient, and regulated providers. NPs have advanced their educational, testing, and certification programs over the past decade. They've enhanced clinical training, moved to advanced degrees, and upgraded program accreditation processes. Other states have recognized advances with NP practice acts that align with professional competence and advanced education. But California has not kept pace.

We can no longer afford to get by on a fraction of our professional capacity. In California, we have a robust network of providers that are well trained, evenly distributed throughout the state, regulated by the Department of Consumer Affairs and well positioned to pay particular attention to currently underserved areas. Deploying these professionals in a team-based delivery model where they work collaboratively with physicians will allow us to meet the demands placed on our healthcare systems created by a rapidly aging physician population and expansion of health insurance coverage. SB 323 will allow for better utilization of our existing infrastructure of trained medical providers to bridge the provider gap.

A 2013 *New York Times* editorial stated, "There is plenty of evidence that well-trained health workers can provide routine service that is every bit as good or even better than what patients would receive from a doctor. And because they are paid less than the doctors, they can save the patient and the healthcare system money."

In addition the *Sacramento Bee* said, "Nurse practitioners have graduate training that gives them the skills to take health histories, conduct physical examinations, formulate medical diagnoses, create plans for care, prescribe medications and order therapies." (Editorial: Make better use of nurse practitioners, May 23, 2013 - *Sacramento Bee*)

Finally, a report released by the Bay Area Council highlighted that allowing NPs to practice to the full extent of their education and training could save California almost \$2 billion on preventative care visits alone over 10 years.

This bill

SB 323 will grant NPs full practice authority, under a specified scope of practice, if he or she has national certification and liability insurance.