TO THE EDITOR:

Nurse practitioners can play a critical role in addressing the country’s growing physician shortage.

With advanced degrees, they are skilled diagnosticians and clinicians who treat acute and chronic illness and prescribe medications.

Four decades of research show that nurse practitioners provide high-quality, cost-effective, comprehensive, patient-centered primary health care with excellent outcomes.

In a growing number of states, a nurse practitioner can own and operate an autonomous, independent practice, not requiring any physician involvement. But in too many states, antiquated laws prevent us from practicing to the full extent of our advanced education and clinical training.

Elected officials in affected states should work to remove these unnecessary barriers. Doing so will instantly increase access to quality health care, improve outcomes and make health care more affordable for all Americans.

ANGELA K. GOLDEN
President, American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
Austin, Tex., July 30, 2012