

Empowering Advanced Practice Nurses in New Jersey: A Celebration and Launchpad

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On June 8, 2026, advanced practice nurses (APNs) and nurse leaders from across the state came together to celebrate the passage of full practice authority for certain APNs in New Jersey (NJ) (Rutgers Today, 2026). It took decades! Bill S2996/A4052 was signed into law by Governor Sherrill on March 30, 2026.



Attendees at the Empowering APNs in NJ Celebration on 6/8/26; Photo Credit: John O'Boyle Photography

The Political Window

More than half of NJ counties lack adequate primary and mental health care providers, and robust evidence demonstrates that allowing APNs to practice to the top of their license expands access to quality and affordable care (New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing, 2025). So, what opened the political window? Two factors converged: The expiration of Governor Murphy's pandemic-era Executive Order that temporarily waived restricted practice and the rapidly amplified collaborative voice of NJ nurses advocating with a shared message.

What the Law Means – and Where It Falls Short

Deborah Drumm, MA, RN, APN-BC, CPCA, a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, summarized the impact, "More APNs will be available to practice inde-

pendently without the burden of a written contract with a physician — contracts that had become a profit center, costing up to \$1,000 per month. Independent practice authority will help retain experienced clinicians and attract more to the state." Winifred Quinn, representing AARP New Jersey added: "Without that advancement — especially with the COVID emergency order coming to an end — thousands of people would have gone without care. AARP is so grateful to the Governor, Senator Vitale, the Senate President, and Speaker Coughlin. It's not a perfect law, but it will sustain access to primary care and mental health services."

Revisions and new provisions were tacked on before that last lap to the finish line. For example, the number of clinical hours that new APNs must complete in collaboration with a physician increased to 5,000 — a requirement many APNs and nurse leaders find excessive. The exclusion of some APN groups was also painful. "The most difficult part was when decisions had to be made about exclusion criteria," shared Marcel Kaganovskaya, DNP, APN, PMHNP-BC, PMHNP-C, FNP-BC, FNP-C, CCRN, VA-BC, FNYAM, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, "We needed to include all APNs of all disciplines. But this opens up the space for a better New Jersey."

Looking Ahead

The June 8th celebration, hosted by the NJCCN, culminated with the premiere of a video that chronicled a shared vision for the future for APNs in NJ.

For the next generation, Angela R. Starkweather, PhD, ACNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN, Dean, Chief Academic Officer, and Professor at Rutgers School of Nursing

offered this charge: "I want them to know the lengths the prior generation went through to get to this point. Don't take it for granted. Step up to the plate — be accountable, be intentional with your scope of practice, and hold that first and foremost in all of your actions."



Dr. Angela Starkweather delivered an inspiring message about New Jersey nurses uniting on 6/8/26; Photo Credit: John O'Boyle Photography

The NJCCN plans to provide education once the new APN regulation is finalized and is forming a coalition of nursing organizations for a united front on common health policy issues going forward. Another next step...expand full practice authority for the APNs excluded from the law. ■

References

- New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing. (2025). New Jersey Access to Care Report. NJCCN. <https://njccn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-Access-to-Care-Final.pdf>
- Rutgers Today (2026, June). Rutgers School of Nursing co-hosted a celebration marking the end of joint protocol requirements for many advanced practice nurses. <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/nursing-leaders-celebrate-full-practice-authority-victory-launch-advocacy-coalition>