

Health Law Alert: Governor Sherrill Signs Law Granting Independent Practice Authority for Certain Advanced Practice Nurses

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On March 30, 2026, Governor Mikie Sherrill signed [P.L.2026, c.6](#) into law. The law makes permanent the independent practice authority of certain advanced practice nurses (APNs) who provide primary or behavioral health care. The law allows qualifying APNs to prescribe medications without joint protocols with collaborating physicians.

Specifically, the law permits an APN who is authorized to practice advanced practice nursing within a population focus of family or individual across the lifespan, adult gerontology, pediatrics, women's health, or behavioral health to practice without a joint protocol with a collaborating physician, provided that the APN has more than 5,000 hours of licensed, active, advanced nursing practice in a role with the applicable population focus, the APN is providing primary health care or behavioral health care, and is not providing health care services in the areas of general obstetrics, elective aesthetic services or cosmetic services. The law allows APNs in the permitted practice areas to prescribe medications, including medical cannabis, independently so long as they do so in accordance with the New Jersey Board of Nursing regulations.

Importantly, the law includes a grace period for certain APNs. If an APN would reach 5,000 hours of licensed, active, advanced nursing practice within 12 months of the law's enactment, the APN may continue practicing without a joint protocol. However, if an APN would have fewer than 5,000 hours within 12 months of the law's enactment, the APN may continue practicing without a joint protocol for only six months, after which the APN must establish a joint protocol with a collaborating physician. Any hours of practice without a joint protocol during this grace period would count toward the 5,000 hour requirement.

By way of background, the law was introduced in the New Jersey Senate on January 13, 2026 as Senate Bill 2996 in response to

the scheduled April 2, 2026 expiration of the COVID-19 era temporary waiver that permitted APNs to practice without joint protocols with collaborating physicians. The original bill provided that APNs who completed more than 24 months or 2,400 hours of licensed, active practice could practice independently, while those with less experience would remain subject to a joint protocol with a collaborating physician. The original bill would have permitted certain certified registered nurse anesthetists to administer all levels of anesthesia without physician supervision or a joint protocol. Notably, the law does not include anesthesia as a practice area for which an APN may practice independently.

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