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By: Paul Sission

Nurse practitioner bill moves forward

An amended version of a bill that would allow nurse practitioners to see patients without doctor supervision cleared a critical hurdle Tuesday, moving one step closer to a full vote of the state Assembly.

With eight yes votes, the Assembly Committee on Business, Professions and Consumer Protection approved Senate Bill 491, which allows nurse practitioners to perform primary care services like prescribing some medications and making a diagnosis without the supervision of a doctor.

The bill has been heavily opposed by the California Medical Society, and its author, Sen. Edward Hernandez, D-West Covina, agreed on a compromise in order to get the legislation out of the committee, where it fell two votes short of passage on Aug. 6.

Hernandez said the amended version of the bill no longer allows nurse practitioners to set up their own offices instead requiring that practitioners work in a “collaborative setting,” such as a hospital, clinic, independent practice association, medical group, skilled nursing facility or accountable care organization.

The bill is now headed to the Assembly’s Committee on Appropriations. If it passes that fiscal hurdle, the bill, along with a sister piece of legislation that expands the powers of pharmacists (SB-493), will get an up-or-down vote on the Assembly floor.

Hernandez said Tuesday that he is not ready to declare victory.

“I want to say we moved in a positive direction. We have had heavy opposition every step of the way. Every committee that I have run these bills through has been a nail biter,” Hernandez said.

That opposition is not giving up. After Tuesday’s vote, the California Society of Anesthesiologists vowed to continue the fight, releasing a statement that expanding scope of practice “will jeopardize patient safety and diminish the quality of care that Californians deserve.”

<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/aug/13/assembly-nurse-practitioner-independent/>