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## Expanding Healthcare to Underserved Communities

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# Expanding Healthcare to Underserved Communities

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## Introduction

According to the Bureau of Health, there are almost 253 million people who do not have adequate access to healthcare in the United States.

- **Provider Shortages** are a main contributor to poor access to care.
- **Policy Suggestions** focus on increasing health insurance coverage, but this does not solve the problem of provider shortages.
- **Underserved Populations** include residents of rural areas, Native Americans, and linguistic minorities.

Policymakers have a key opportunity to increase access to care by removing barriers that prevent existing providers from serving those who need them.

Study conducted by Researcher Managers and Undergraduate Research Fellows from the Center for Growth and Opportunity at Utah State University



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## Telehealth

Telehealth use showed a reduction of 53% in hospital bed days and 33% in admissions. Also shown was high patient satisfaction, and no change in health outcomes.

State by state licensing limits its ability to increase physicians supply and reduce the costs of bed days and travel

License reciprocity and redefining the location of care are key to promoting telehealth.

## Scope of Practice

Scope of Practice restrictions placed on Nurse Practitioners and Physicians Assistants limit the benefits they could provide.

Twenty-two U.S. states already allow nurse practitioners full practice ability.

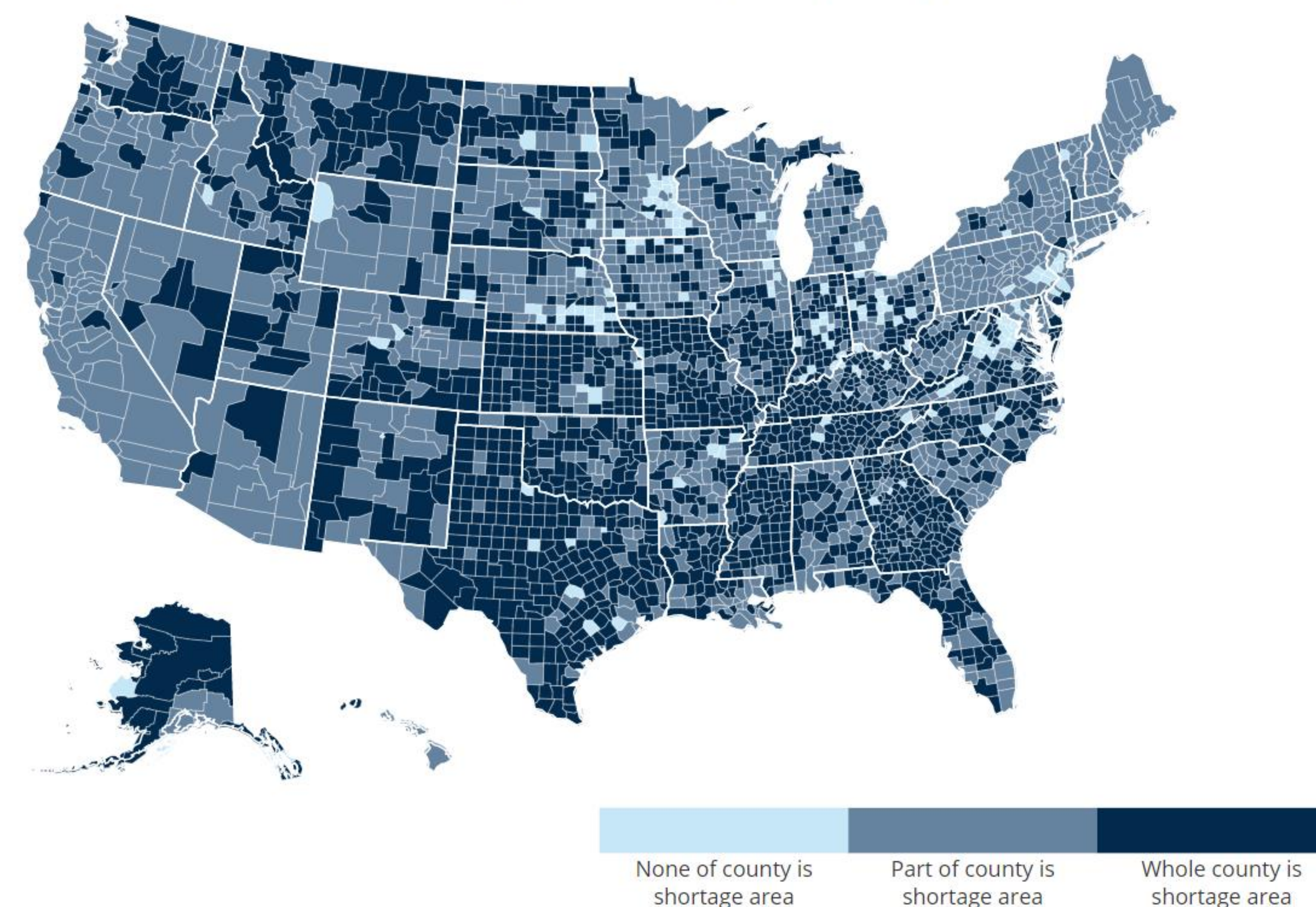
Broader scope of practice laws are associated with about a 10% decrease in the cost of outpatient care, while maintaining high patient satisfaction and quality of care.



*Telehealth is the use of technology to facilitate the remote administration of healthcare services. Access to healthcare professionals can be available from the comfort of ones own home.*

## Figure 1 – Health Professional Shortage Areas

Health Professional Shortage Areas: Primary Care, by County, 2019



*Access to primary care is a key metric in diagnosing conditions before they become serious and in preventing hospitalizations. At least some portion of almost all counties in the United States face shortages of professionals providing primary care, with many counties facing shortages throughout the entire county.*

## Conclusions

Solutions such as promoting telehealth and allowing full scope of practice to Nurse Practitioners and Physicians Assistants can increase access to care, without worsening the average health outcome for patients.

Restrictions on these methods of delivering care reduce the amount of primary care provided.

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