

Denise Flynn, MSN, PMHCNS-BC
3924 Clock Pointe Trail #104
Stow, Ohio 44224
Telephone: (330) 475-1870
Fax: (330) 475-1872

Proponent Testimony: House Bill 421
House Health and Aging Committee
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Chairwoman Gonzales, Vice-chair Huffman and Ranking Member Antonio, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 421 which will give trained pharmacists the ability to administer certain injectable prescribed drugs. I am speaking specifically about the ability to meet the need of persons with severe mental illness to access long-acting injectable antipsychotic medication.

I am a Psychiatric Clinical Nurse Specialist with prescriptive authority currently employed at Signature Health, a large community mental health center serving both suburban and rural areas of Lake and Ashtabula Counties. It is a challenge each and every day to ensure that everyone with severe mental illness has access to the medication they need.

Two of the biggest challenges patients face are accessing our center where long-acting injections can be administered and the timeliness of getting patients there. Distance and transportation problems prevent patients from receiving needed injections on time. Treatment providers would benefit from having community based resources for the administration of properly prescribed medications. Having appropriately trained pharmacists located within our patients' communities would eliminate a barrier to receiving this vital treatment.

In addition to my community mental health center employment, I also treat patients at a small private practice location serving Protage County where treatment resources are limited. There, I face a different challenge that is also faced by many of my colleagues in private practice. In this small office setting I do not have the resources to administer injections. If a person that I am treating would benefit from a long-acting injection, I must refer him or her to the local community mental health center. This disrupts the treatment relationship and trust I have with the patient and the family. They must start over with new providers. Having appropriately trained pharmacists able to administer the prescribed injection would allow us to continue our treatment relationship.

I have been practicing as a psychiatric nurse since 1972 and have witnessed the benefits of long-acting injectable antipsychotic medications. It is my opinion that these medications improve the safety of individuals with mental illness and the communities in which they live. In addition, they enhance the quality of life for individuals with mental illness and their families. The shortage of places where patients can access this treatment constitutes a barrier to their care.

I believe this legislation will improve the quality of treatment for Ohioans with mental illness and reduce the negative impact of inadequate treatment for individuals, families, and communities. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and I am available to answer any questions that the committee may have or to discuss this testimony further.