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On behalf of the
Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association

Before Members of the
House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

Proponent Testimony on H.B. 145
Confidential Program for Treating Impaired Healthcare Professionals

May 31, 2017

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 145, a bill pertaining to the development of a confidential program for treating impaired healthcare professionals in Ohio. I submit this written testimony, as president of the Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association (OPPA), a statewide medical specialty organization whose more than 1,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness and substance use disorders.

House Bill 145 requires the State Medical Board to establish a confidential program known as "One-Bite," for the treatment of health care practitioners who are impaired. It allows a practitioner (who has not previously participated in "One Bite" or been sanctioned by the Board for impairment as a result of alcohol, drugs or other substances) to avoid discipline, if certain conditions are met, including the completion of treatment to address the impairment.

House Bill 145 also requires the board to contract with one external organization to conduct the "One-Bite" program and to perform monitoring services related to the program. It also sets specific eligibility requirements for the program, including the types of practitioners to whom it will be available. Following evaluation, the monitoring organization must refer the practitioner to treatment with a Board-approved provider. The organization must establish, in consultation with the treatment provider, the terms and conditions for the practitioner's continued participation and successful completion of the program.

A majority of other states in the country offer a similar type of non-disciplinary alternative to seeking treatment much like the One-Bite program, for the purpose of allowing practitioners to voluntarily seek

treatment for a substance use disorder (when no harm has been done to a patient) without fear of repercussion by the medical board, which is often a deterrent to seeking treatment.

We know that approximately 10–12% of physicians will develop a substance use disorder during their careers, a rate similar to or exceeding that of the general population. Through early intervention and treatment, healthcare professionals are able to get the help they need – voluntarily – before their practice is impaired – thereby enhancing patient safety.

This legislation is the result of months of discussions between the OPPA, along with many other statewide physician organizations (all together known as the Medical Association Coalition), and the State Medical Board of Ohio aimed at making improvements to Ohio’s current “one-bite” program. The OPPA sincerely appreciates the efforts of Representatives Huffman and Sprague in facilitating discussions of all parties that resulted in important and meaningful legislation that makes improvements to Ohio’s One-Bite program.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 145. We urge you to vote in favor of this important legislation.