



OHIO PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

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Proponent Testimony for HB 673

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Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State & Local Government Committee. My name is Antonio Ciaccia, Director of Government & Public Affairs for the Ohio Pharmacists Association (OPA). I thank you for the opportunity to give our support for HB 673, legislation sponsored by Rep. Bill Roemer that will better equip our state to keep our communities safe from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, HB 673 will codify recent moves from the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy that allow pharmacists to order and administer COVID-19 diagnostic and antibody tests. That emergency guidance from the Board was followed by a recent edict from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, which opened up the ability for pharmacists to order and conduct these tests all across the country.

In their recent announcement, HHS Secretary Alex Azar said, “Giving pharmacists the authorization to order and administer COVID-19 tests to their patients means easier access to testing for Americans who need it. Pharmacists play a vital role in delivering convenient access to important public health services and information.”

As pharmacists in Ohio are already equipped with the ability to administer other types of point-of-care tests like influenza and strep, the added ability to order and administer COVID-19 tests is a natural fit for our state’s more than 2,000 community pharmacies.

HB 673 will ensure that patient access to these tests at pharmacies will occur throughout the duration of the pandemic.

In addition to the ability to test for COVID-19, HB 673 will also add forthcoming COVID-19 vaccines into the list of immunizations that pharmacists are authorized to provide.

While today, pharmacists are able to administer any CDC-recommended vaccine to patients seven years of age or older, the current law requires that new vaccines must be added to the pharmacist’s scope through the regulatory process. HB 673 will ensure that as soon as a vaccine is available, regulatory red tape will be minimized, and patient access to the immunization is swift and seamless.

In reviewing the language with Rep. Roemer, we highlighted the current laws and rules surrounding pharmacist-administered testing and drug administration. And we made one policy recommendation for the bill in order to fully capture the intent of the legislation.

In Ohio, even though a pharmacist can “order” a vaccine for a patient who requests it, the pharmacist is technically not a “prescriber” of the vaccine. The ability for the pharmacist to order the vaccine is derived from a required protocol or standing order with a physician. For every type of vaccine that a

pharmacist administers, Ohio law requires that the pharmacist obtain a written protocol from a physician, outlining the standards of practice, expectations, and drug administration procedures.

Despite pharmacists having more education and training on medications than any other healthcare provider, other immunizing healthcare professionals do not share these same requirements. And unfortunately, these burdensome administrative requirements – while not significantly prohibitive – do represent a major logistical hurdle if the intent is to make vaccines readily available as they begin being produced by manufacturers.

While the Ohio Pharmacists Association emphatically supports HB 673, we recommend additional language that would waive this protocol requirement.

HB 673 represents effective and pragmatic ways to codify part of the pharmacist's role in helping to get Ohioans back to work, back to their extended families and friends, and back to a sense of normalcy, without materially impacting the pharmacist scope of practice. HB 673 will ensure that pharmacists are positioned to step up when Ohio needs them most.

We would like to thank Representative Roemer for introducing this legislation and for his active dialogue with us on this issue, and we appreciate the members of this committee for your swift consideration of this important measure that will better equip our state with the tools we need to keep our citizens safe and healthy.

Thank you for the opportunity to give our support for HB 673, and I'll happily answer any questions you may have.

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