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**Testimony of A.J. Groeber, Executive Director  
State Medical Board of Ohio  
March 26, 2019**

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Minority Member West, and members of the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee, my name is A.J. Groeber, and I am the Executive Director of the State Medical Board of Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to present information on the State Medical Board's budget for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

It is the mission of the State Medical Board to protect and enhance the health and safety of the public through effective medical regulation. All items requested in this budget will help us to fulfill that mission more effectively and efficiently.

The Board licenses and regulates over 86,000 medical professionals – a growth in volume of over 30% in the past 5 years, and over 45% in the past decade.

The Medical Board defines the standards of care for safe medical practice. These standards ensure that licensees are qualified to provide medical care in this state, and are the basis for discipline when those standards are violated. When the Board receives complaints against its licensees, it investigates those alleged violations and takes disciplinary action - when necessary - to deny, revoke, or restrict a licensee's right to practice medicine in Ohio.

In addition to its routine licensure and regulatory activities, the Board has focused its efforts on two major initiatives in the current biennium:

First, the Board has continued in the fight against prescription drug misuse by partnering with health care boards and state agencies, legislators, and licensee associations to share information and collaborate on ways to better educate prescribers on the safe use of opioids. Specific initiatives have included educational learning modules, monthly newsletters, fact sheets with examples of best practices, and templates such as chronic pain management contracts which providers can quickly download from the website and complete with their patients.

We have supplemented these educational efforts with new and updated rules for treatment of acute, sub-acute, and chronic pain with opioids. Adults and minors are now limited to 7- and 5-days, respectively, for most acute pain conditions. And dosages are capped to limit exposure to these highly-addictive drugs. For adults who are currently – or may be on the path to becoming – chronic opioid users, new checkpoints and consultation requirements encourage non-opioid therapies, and professional collaboration to ensure appropriate treatment.

The impact of these efforts has been significant:

- Doctor shopping is significantly curtailed, with an 89% decrease since 2011.
  - The total doses of opioids dispensed has dropped by 325 million annually since 2012.
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- Ohio leads the nation in responsible prescribing with providers checking OARRS approximately 600,000 times per day – a more than 4,900% increase since 2011.

Every day that a prescription does not include an opioid, every dose that is lowered, and every patient check in OARRS reduces the risk of misuse and diversion. The Medical Board's efforts have undeniably saved lives, and we are very proud of the continued improvement in prescribers' practices.

The Board's second area of focus has been to support the continued growth in the number of licensed medical professionals in the state of Ohio. Every person who lives and works in this state benefits from access to a large pool of qualified medical professionals. We have actively pursued opportunities to engage students and trainees, both physicians and allied medical practitioners. Our goal has been to improve the Board's processes, encourage earlier licensure, and ensure that every resident graduates with a full license stapled to their diploma; they trained here, and we want them to stay here.

These efforts have borne fruit: the Board has held steady on the number of new physician licenses issued each of the past two years, but now processes them 34% faster. When you consider that the average physician sees 5,000 patients and brings in about \$1.6 million in billing revenue each year, the Medical Board's efforts are significantly improving patient access, and driving economic growth. By our estimates, the efficiencies and growth realized in the past two years have resulted in more than 750,000 additional patient visits, \$166 million in employer revenue, and nearly \$800,000 in extra state income tax revenue.

Looking toward the next biennium, the Medical Board will continue to focus on rigorous standards for licensure, faster processing and improved efficiency, and increased customer support.

In terms of regulation, the Board is looking to continue to educate and encourage licensees to be mindful when prescribing controlled substances. We see our licensees as the first line of defense against the heroin epidemic; whether directly prescribed or diverted from a patient, excess prescription opioids continue to be a significant driver for substance misuse, overdose, and death. Our charge in the next biennium is to instill the lessons of the opioid prescribing rules to our licensees, continue to shrink pill amounts and strengths, and encourage opioid use only when truly necessary.

Operationally, the Medical Board does not seek expansion of its headcount in this budget. Our process improvements have driven more than a 6% increase in completed investigations despite a 15% vacancy rate in that department, and I have already detailed our improvements in licensure statistics. We are confident that we can continue to meet and exceed the expectations of our customers at current staffing levels.

In closing, we ask you to please support the budget that is proposed. The State Medical Board believes it can meet its goals in the next biennium with the modest budget increases as outlined in the Governor's Operating Budget. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.