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Finance-Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee
Health, Human Services and Medicaid
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Ways and Means
Joint Education Oversight Committee

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Senate Bill 177 Sponsor Testimony **September 26, 2017**

Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 177.

This bill would make volunteer health care services provided to indigent and uninsured persons exempt from civil liability. This legislation builds on the provision in H.B. 290 passed and signed by the Governor last year to permit health care professionals to earn continuing education credit by providing volunteer health care services.

When in active practice, health care providers' medical malpractice insurance will generally cover volunteer service, but when they retire they no longer have coverage which severely restricts their ability to volunteer their services.

By offering volunteers immunity for the hours they donate, we can ensure that their care will be utilized without new, undue risks to providers. We will increase the amount of free services to indigent and uninsured persons, making the services more readily available at no cost to the state of Ohio.

In spite of Medicaid expansion, there are still approximately 8% of Ohioans who are either without insurance or who are underinsured. These folks continue to put a burden on our health care system as they tend to only access care when their illness reaches a serious and perhaps life-threatening level.

The bill stipulates that patients would be provided written notice of this immunity and that the Ohio Department of Health would submit annual reports to the General Assembly on collected information regarding the efficacy of access and treatment outcomes of the health care services provided.

This type of legislation has already been passed in the state of Florida, where there have been over 2.3 million visits to these volunteer health care professionals since the legislation passed. There are also six other states that have introduced this type of legislation.

As you may know, I am married to an orthopedic surgeon. As he approaches retirement he would love to continue to practice his trade to some degree. I know he is not alone. At the same time, there are hundreds, if not thousands of people, in our community who go without adequate health care. This legislation marries these two circumstances in a way that can make a significant

difference in our communities and across Ohio. I would appreciate your support for this legislation and would be happy to take any questions.