



**Ohio House Health & Aging Committee
Testimony by Steve Wilkins
Coordinator of Injury Prevention, Community Outreach, and Trauma Education
10/14/15**

Chairwoman Gonzales, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio House Health & Aging Committee, thank you for having me here today to speak in support of House Bill 261, which would upgrade Ohio's statewide trauma system. My name is Steve Wilkins, and I am the Coordinator of Injury Prevention, Community Outreach, and Trauma Education at the Akron General Health System.

The health system includes five emergency rooms in the area. Three of these are located at the three Akron General Health & Wellness Centers in Summit County, one at the Lodi Community Hospital in Medina County, and one at the Akron General Medical Center, located in downtown Akron.

The Akron General Medical Center has been an American College of Surgeons Verified Trauma Center since 1996, and a Level I Trauma Center since 1999. As you may know, a Level I Trauma Center is recognized as the highest-level regional resource for the comprehensive care of seriously ill and injured patients, making Akron General highly committed to injury prevention, care of the patient, education, research, and outreach.

In 2014, Akron General cared for more than 1,300 trauma patients originating from 20 different counties within the State of Ohio. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has indicated that injury has become the leading cause of death for persons aged 1 through 44 years, which is reflected in Ohio's increase in overall mortality rate for injury.

Akron General is committed to addressing this problem through a series of injury prevention programs, community outreach, and trauma educational efforts. With falls and motor vehicle accidents being the leading causes of major trauma in our community, we focus our prevention efforts in these areas.

We hold weekly Matter of Balance classes for older adults. This course was designed by Maine Health and is an evidence-based program that is proven to reduce the incidence of falls. I also present fall prevention lectures for retiree and senior groups several times per month.

Distracted driving and drunk driving are two of the major causes of motor vehicle accident injuries. We are tackling these issues through awareness and education. We have presented 3D safe driving experiences for several high schools in our area. We have also participated in the design and production of several billboards throughout Akron and

Canton with the messages of safe driving habits. These programs are incredibly valuable and require the collaboration of many departments, community organizations, and partner trauma centers. Many of these efforts are made possible through collaborations of the Northeastern Ohio Regional Trauma Network (NORTN).

Like these programs, House Bill 261 can also help us to produce better results for the citizens of Ohio by making our state trauma system more effective. As a health system, Akron General is in support of the legislation's proposed creation of a 19-member Ohio Trauma Board within the Ohio Department of Health. The goal of this board is to achieve better outcomes for Ohio trauma victims - including provisions intended to minimize the incidence of events that force Ohioans into trauma settings. This aligns with the goals of Akron General and its Trauma Center.

We support of this bill because it would help provide trauma-related education, expand the state's injury prevention system, organize a system of regional trauma organization, and require trauma patients to be transported to the closest and most appropriate facility.

Akron General has been actively involved in the drafting phase of this legislation and we are thankful to the sponsors, Representatives Grossman and Huffman for including us in this process.

Again, thank you again for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 261 on behalf of Akron General. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.