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Senator John Eklund - Sponsor Testimony
Senate Concurrent Resolution 10
Senate Medicaid Committee
October 14, 2015

Good Afternoon Chairman Burke, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Cafaro and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to come here today in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 10, which will encourage the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to revise survey measures included in the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) that relate to patient pain management.

As we have learned in the past year, drug overdose deaths continue to be a public health crisis in Ohio. This legislation will be a key step in changing the HCAHPS, a survey instrument that measures patients' perceptions of their hospital experience, surveys patients on the topic of pain management and ties Medicare reimbursements to HCAHPS results.

The Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA) and Cleveland Clinic surveyed 1,100 Ohio physicians, 74% of which believe HCAHPS pain measures add to over prescribing. Pain management is critical to enhancing the quality of life for patients suffering from acute and chronic pain, yet the pressure to achieve high scores based on patient demand for pain management presents perverse and dangerous incentives for physicians to liberally prescribe opioids.

Patient care should be measured using validated metrics that hold caregivers accountable while providing latitude to individualize patient care based on best medical practices, rather than patient perceptions, and this cycle of over-prescribing opiates has been implicated in substance abuse patterns across the United States and CMS can make changes to measure this survey.

This resolution will call on CMS to immediately begin work to revise the HCAHPS survey measures related to pain to reinforce patient and caregiver communication through the development of enhanced questions about pain management in order to prevent abuse and promote healing. This resolution will be a companion for H.C.R. 16 under Rep. Sears and Rep. Antonio's sponsorship.

Again, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on behalf of this resolution. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.