



**Ohio Association of Community Health Centers, Julie DiRossi-King, COO
Written Proponent Testimony on Amended Substitute Senate Bill 265
House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
Wednesday, December 12, 2018**

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and Members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC), thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Amended Substitute Senate Bill 265, specifically its inclusion of the Ohio Medicaid program. Support of SB 265 will enable Ohio's Federally Qualified Health Centers and FQHC Look-Alikes to initiate pharmacy-driven collaborations that in turn save the entire health care system significant cost, and help prevent unnecessary sick care including hospital admissions and readmissions.

The Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC) represents all of Ohio's Federally Qualified Health Centers and FQHC Look-Alikes (more commonly referred to as Community Health Centers), delivering accessible, affordable, high-quality primary and preventive health care to more than 751,000 Ohioans in 2017 – regardless of insurance status. OACHC strongly supports SB 265 to recognize the provider status for pharmacists in both commercial and public Medicaid markets.

Ohio's Community Health Centers have a proven record of delivering high-quality, low-cost health care, coupled with a strong presence in impoverished urban neighborhoods and small towns and rural counties. The innovative health center team care model, including pharmacists, removes barriers and health disparities, lowers health system costs and allows communities to lead in the direction of their own care.

More than half of the patients Ohio's Community Health Centers care for are covered by Medicaid (58%). By incorporating pharmacists as a reimbursable member of the care team, Community Health Centers will be able to enhance their ability to improve patient outcomes and lessen the burden on an often over-committed provider base – all while reducing overall system cost. As it stands now, our primary care practices are limited by financial constraints to truly see the benefit of pharmacists' services. Amending the bill to include Medicaid has recognized pharmacists as service providers across payors, which will compensate the critical work pharmacists do in our Community Health Centers each and every day.

One example comes from Health Partners of Western Ohio (HPWO), an Ohio FQHC that participated in the Ohio KePRO Adverse Drug Events (ADE) and the Patient Safety Clinical Pharmacy Collaborative (PSPC) projects, where they achieved remarkable success by focusing on an integrated service delivery model to incorporate pharmaceutical considerations and referrals at key junctures. Under the leadership of then Director of Pharmacy Jenny Clark, HPWO dramatically reduced hospital admission and readmission rates in just three months. **Specifically, this pharmacy-driven collaboration produced an impressive 67 percent relative improvement in hospital admissions, and 100 percent relative improvement in readmissions for its target patient population.** SB 265 will allow initiatives such as this to be sustained and replicated, saving overall system costs and improving Ohioans' quality of life.

As we think about reinventing our health care delivery system to emphasize prevention and team-based primary care, and push to deliver more cost-effective and patient-centered comprehensive care, Community Health Centers are uniquely positioned to continue to lead this transformation and make it a reality. SB 265 is a critical opportunity for Ohio to continue to positively impact the health of our state.

On behalf of Ohio's 54 member Health Centers, we applaud the vision and leadership displayed by Senator Dolan, and respectfully ask for this Committee's support in expediting SB 265 in the process for enactment. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact OACHC's Chief Operating Officer Julie DiRossi-King at (614) 884-3101, ext 226 or jdirossi@ohiohc.org.