



Collaborating to  
Ensure a Healthy Ohio

October 10, 2017

The Honorable Stephen Huffman, Chair  
House Health Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 South High Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Huffman,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 273, sponsored by Representative Gavarone. The Ohio Hospital Association represents 220 hospitals and 13 health systems and exists to collaborate with our members to ensure a healthy Ohio. We write today to oppose the current draft of HB 273.

The goal of all hospitals is to make sure that patients receive the right care, at the right time, in the right place by well-trained physicians. HB 273 would prohibit hospitals from requiring a physician to secure a maintenance of certification as a condition of being employed by or contracting with the hospital or having admitting privileges at the hospital. Hospitals are very concerned that this legislation does not improve quality, does not increase access and puts unnecessary restrictions on hospitals.

Maintenance of board certification is an important quality measure available to hospitals to assure that a doctor has the highest level of training available and is current with the knowledge and skills of their specialty. By specifically stating in law that one of the few nationally accepted determinants of quality cannot be utilized in determining credentialing in a facility, the legislature is significantly limiting a facility's ability to put patients first and ensure that the highest quality care is provided. There is growing evidence that requiring maintenance of certification does improve the quality of health care in hospitals. Recent information from the American Board of Internal Medicine has shown that some patients treated by ABIM certified physicians have a 19% lower mortality rate and such physicians are five times less likely to have state licensure disciplinary action. Recent findings from a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association suggest that maintenance of certification helps to control national Medicare costs, saving up to \$167 per Medicare patient per year. Without the ability to utilize maintenance of certification, hospitals have very few options to assure that doctors that have privileges in their facilities meet the highest standards available. You can't improve quality of care in hospitals by eliminating one of the very few nationally recognized measures of physician quality available to hospitals.

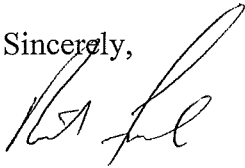
It is imperative that hospitals have the ability to determine who can provide care in their facilities. As employers, hospitals must have the flexibility to implement health and safety precautions they deem most appropriate for carrying out their mission to provide high quality patient care. It has never been the goal of hospitals to make it harder to find well-trained physicians. Currently, hospitals can determine what credentials are required to gain privileges in their facilities. These decisions are made jointly between medical professionals and the hospital administration. This

flexibility is important to assure that hospitals have the most qualified physicians available for patients It should be up to the hospital administration to determine the qualifications needed for physicians to practice in their facilities.

Finally, this is an issue between medical professionals and their board certifying entities. It is not appropriate to put hospitals in the middle of this debate. On July 26, 2017 a small group of national medical specialty societies and state medical society CEOs, including representatives from Ohio, gathered to discuss this important issue. Both entities have agreed that there are opportunities to collectively address this issue and find common ground. They also agree that together they must keep the patient first and do all they can to ensure high quality patient care. Both entities have agreed to further these conversations in December of this year. Hospitals feel strongly that it would be premature to address legislation prior to the completion these conversations between the entities that are directly involved in this debate.

Ohio hospitals appreciate the work of the House Health Committee to improve access to quality health care throughout the state of Ohio. We feel strongly that this legislation does not accomplish this goal. The bill puts unnecessary restrictions on hospitals, could jeopardize the quality of care patients receive and should not be used as leverage in discussions between physicians and their board certifying entities.

Sincerely,



Rick Frank  
Senior Director, Government Affairs



Stephanie Gilligan  
Director, Advocacy

Cc: House Health Committee  
Steven Alexander, Policy Advisor, House Majority Caucus  
Shawn Kasych, Policy Director, House Majority Caucus