

House Bill 541
Proponent Testimony
House Health Committee
April 11, 2018

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and distinguished members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 541. This bill is greatly needed as it would allow healthcare professionals from out of state areas to offer their skills and services at charitable events for the betterment of communities across the state of Ohio. Since I am not a healthcare professional in the medical, dental or vision disciplines, I will be providing testimony from a personal perspective, that of having a healthcare need and that of volunteering at charitable events.

First, let me address the healthcare needs perspective. In my 30 years of employment, the healthcare coverage available to my family has run the gamut. I have had a full-time job at a non-profit, religious organization with no healthcare. I have had a full-time job at a small family business with healthcare but no dental or vision coverage. I have had a full-time job at a large manufacturing facility which provided healthcare and some dental and vision coverage, but a portion of the costs for the policy was borne by me, the employee. The list of combinations goes on. This example probably covers many of the folks that we see at free medical clinics. Others that attend are those who are holding down three part-time jobs without the needed hours at any one employer to warrant healthcare benefits. Many of these families are considered the "working poor". Others that attend are elderly and/or retired and their benefits do not cover dental or vision. The self-pay costs for a dental visit or a doctor's office visit or a pair of glasses is just more than the family budget can handle and so many do as I did and go without.

Next, I'll address the experiences I have had to date volunteering at free Remote Area Medical clinics. I have served at two clinics in the state of Nevada and am the Co-Chair for the Ashtabula County, Ohio event. We had a gentleman attend a clinic in Nevada that was so ill, he was transported to the hospital and later diagnosed with cancer. We saw children who have never had an eye exam and were provided their first pair of glasses. We saw single parent families that have not been to the dentist in years due to lack of coverage and costs associated. For our clinic in Ohio, I have fielded calls from residents from Ashtabula County that want to know how many teeth the dentist can pull at one time because they have several that are broken or causing them pain. I have fielded a call from a patient in

need of medical attention due to an in-home accident, but he has put off going to see the doctor simply because his coverage is insufficient and the cost of the visit beyond his means. I have fielded a call from a cancer survivor that needs treatment for new issues caused by her chemotherapy sessions. These individuals and many, many more that will be attending our clinic in Ashtabula are not able to absorb the costs for these desperately needed services.

This brings me to my final testimony topic, without this legislation it makes it extremely difficult to recruit and staff a free medical event such as the Remote Area Medical clinic to be held next week in Ashtabula, Ohio. Although we have done much publicizing, educating, and recruiting over the last 14 months we are falling short in the vision area of the clinic. Remote Area Medical (or RAM) suggests having ten vision "lanes" at an average clinic. We are expecting our clinic to be larger than average and have, to date, only been able to staff the vision portion with three Optometrists and/or Ophthalmologists per day. This will greatly reduce the number of patients we will be able to serve. On the dental side of the clinic we were unable to accept a dentist that is willing to serve all three days of the clinic; he is currently practicing in New York state and has been doing so for over 20 years. We were unable to utilize dental students and their professors from a dental school in Erie, Pennsylvania, a mere 30-minute drive from our clinic site. Imagine the impact our clinic could make if these professionals were able to give back to the community unencumbered by the temporary licensure application and large fees associated with the current process. Many of these professionals incur personal expense for travel, lodging, and meals. They often close their practices for several days in order to travel to a clinic to donate their time and skills. Under the current legislation, the requirement for the additional application and associated fees becomes a rather large deterrent, especially when combined with the personal sacrifices already being made by the healthcare professionals. This leaves the charitable clinic understaffed and our most vulnerable residents unserved.

The need is great to be sure, but the willingness to serve is great as well. Please consider the passing of HB 541 to ensure that willing professionals can help provide quality healthcare on the largest scale possible to our residents that need it the most. Please join with us and Remote Area Medical to support their mission, "To prevent pain and alleviate suffering by providing free, quality health care to those in need."

Chairman Huffman and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on House Bill 541. I am happy to respond to any questions you may have at this time.