



Chairman Burke, Vice-Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid committee:

My name is A.J. Groeber, and I am the Executive Director of the State Medical Board of Ohio. I am testifying today in support of HB 145, the Impaired Medical Practitioners bill. The medical board has worked extensively with the medical community – licensees, associations, treatment providers, monitoring firms, and employers – to develop the legislation before you today.

It has long been a goal of the board to provide a means for the confidential treatment for impaired licensees. Individuals who meet the criteria for the current one-bite reporting exemption must comply with the board's rules: a minimum of 28 days of in-patient treatment (during which they cannot practice) and two years of after-care treatment. There is currently no requirement for ongoing drug screening, nor therapeutic recovery counseling.

While well-intentioned, the current rules miss many of the benefits of a modern recovery program. The proposed legislation gives greater flexibility for treatment providers to custom-tailor the format and length of initial treatment. Licensees are only allowed to return to work after a minimum of 30 days, and with clearance of their treatment provider. As the licensee returns to practice, the bill provides for the highest standards in terms of counseling, support networks, and monitoring over the course of 5 years. Administering the program is a monitoring firm with whom the board will contract to provide hands-on, personalized service to our licensees and treatment providers. This set of requirements gives impaired licensees the greatest chance at recovery on their first attempt, while providing greater immediate and long-term public protection.

This bill is the product of extensive collaboration with partners across the state. I would personally like to thank the team from the Ohio Physicians Health Program for their insight and determination as we crafted the program before you, and the numerous legislators who facilitated our discussions. I truly believe that the bill before you is a model program for the country – it provides for adequate regulation and public safeguards, while offering the proper incentives and means for an impaired licensee to seek treatment and recovery.

I would also like to inform this committee about an amendment to the bill related to the consolidation of the Ohio Board of Dietetics and Ohio Respiratory Care Board into the State Medical Board. The provisions of the amendment align the processes and procedures of these two consolidated boards into the existing structures of the medical board. The amendment is a technical clean-up, and is designed to ensure a smooth transition, streamline processes, and enhance customer service. I would note that this amendment has support from the professional associations representing these licensees.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 145, and am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A.J. Groeber
Executive Director, State Medical Board of Ohio
