

Andrew Chiodo, Dual Licensed Dispensing Optician Testimony

Senate Health and Human Services and Medicaid Committee
September 25, 2018
HB 541

Chairman Burke, Vice-chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the committee. My name is Andrew Chiodo, and I was a volunteer member of the Ashtabula, Ohio Remote Area Medical (RAM) leadership team in April of 2018, and care for patients as a Dual Licensed Dispensing Optician in Ashtabula.

I have been employed as the manager of the Ashtabula Walmart Vision Center for the past 13 years. Over that time, I have had the opportunity to serve over 5,000 individual patients each year in my vision center, and have engaged in the community during local health fairs throughout Ashtabula County, participating in 4 or more health fair events each year. I have seen first-hand the need for quality eyecare for the residents of this county. Each day, I have conversations with residents who are uninsured in the area of vision health including the purchase of basic eyewear. This deficiency leads to residents who use eyewear longer than they should or live their lives jeopardizing their own health and that of others, as they drive or perform daily life functions without the corrected vision that they need.

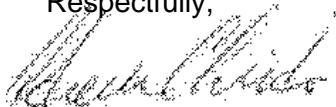
Last summer, I was approached by Heather Johnson of the RAM organization and asked to lead the vision recruitment for the Ashtabula event of April 20-22, 2018. As I investigated the mission of the RAM organization, I knew this would provide a much-needed service to the residents of this county. The potential of providing eyewear to hundreds of people over a 3-day event would go a long way to relieve this deficiency. I was eager to help recruit Opticians as well as Optometrists and Ophthalmologists for the 3 day event.

Ashtabula County has a handful of Optometrists, all of whom are self-employed, and only 1 Ophthalmologist who sees patients full-time in the county. Recruiting these professionals was a struggle, mostly due to their inability to trade office hours for volunteer hours. The entire RAM Leadership team reached out to doctors in neighboring Ohio counties, but again struggled to receive commitment for our event.

I strongly urge support of House Bill 541 regarding out-of-state licensed eye professionals ability to more easily provide volunteer healthcare services for future charitable events. The ability to recruit these professionals from border states (or nationwide) would potentially ease the recruiting burden and greatly multiply the services which RAM or any other charitable organization could provide in underserved areas of our great state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,



Andrew Chiodo