

HB 541

Proponent Testimony

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

September 25, 2018

Chairman Burke, Vice chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 541. This legislation would allow out-of-state licensed healthcare professionals to provide services on a volunteer basis at charitable events without first obtaining an Ohio License.

My name is Tina Staslewski. I am the Vice President of Business Development for Ashtabula County Medical Center, an independent, not-for-profit hospital. I am also a member of the leadership committee that brought a three-day free health clinic to Ashtabula County in April of 2018 in conjunction with Remote Area Medical. RAM is a nonprofit provider of mobile medical clinics, whose mission is to prevent pain and alleviate suffering by providing free, quality healthcare to those in need. The free care provided at RAM mobile clinics includes general medical, dental, and vision.

Ohio's 2016 health assessment shows that our great state ranks in the bottom quartile in terms of health and well-being, Key statistics include:

- 11.6% of adults in Ohio are uninsured
- 32.1% of Ohioans live in areas underserved by primary care physicians, as defined by the ratio of primary care physicians to residents
- 61.8% of Ohioans live in areas underserved by dentists, as defined by the ratio of dentists to residents
- For the state, the ratio of primary care physicians to residents is 1,300:1; compared to the best performing counties in the United States which have a ratio of 1,040:1 (as reported by countyhealthrankings.org)
- The statewide ratio of dentists to residents is 1,710:1; compared to the top US performers with a ratio of 1,320:1 (as reported by countyhealthrankings.org)

- **13.1% of adults in Ohio did not see a doctor in the past year due to cost, and only 65.3% of adults saw a dentist in the past year**
- **11% of adult Ohioans have unmet vision care needs**

In my role at Ashtabula County Medical Center, I have overseen the development of our 2013 and 2016 Community Health Needs Assessments and the implementation strategies to address those needs.

Access to healthcare is among the top health needs for Ashtabula County. Our primary care physician to resident ratio is 2,750:1, and our dentist to resident ratio is 2,670:1, worse than the state average and much worse than the best performing counties in the United States. Additionally, 11% of our population is uninsured.

All of Ashtabula County is designated a Health Professionals Shortage Area for dental and mental healthcare, and 16 minor civil divisions hold that designation for primary care. In the City of Ashtabula alone, nine census tracts are categorized as Medically Underserved Areas/Populations.

Across the state, access to care is one of the top four health issues for all county categories: urban, suburban, rural, and Appalachian. A report by the Robert Graham Center indicates that Ohio will need an additional 681 primary care providers by 2030 just to maintain current access levels. That is an increase of 8%.

By working in conjunction with Remote Area Medical, the Ashtabula County Community Host Group could have benefitted from the over 120,000 licensed professionals who are willing to travel and provide care at the RAM clinic. Many of these licensed professionals are able to volunteer at RAM clinics in West Virginia because that state allows out-of-state licensed professionals to provide care on a volunteer basis at free clinics. In fact, House Bill 541 was modeled after West Virginia's law. Unfortunately, because Ohio is currently a closed state, those volunteers are unavailable to us. This significantly reduced the number of people we were able to provide care to during our clinic this past spring.

On a statewide level, many of the counties with the highest access need border our neighboring states of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Indiana. As indicated in the State Health Assessment, the ratio of primary care physician to resident in the worst performing Ohio County is 14,904:1 and the ratio for dentist to resident ratio is 8,788:1. In both instances, the worst performing Ohio County borders a neighboring state. Our current law prohibits providers licensed in those neighboring states to volunteer at free clinics to help fill gaps in access and care.

Although this legislation was not in place in time for Ohio's first RAM clinic in Ashtabula this past April, the need is great across all of Ohio. It is my hope that this legislation will be enacted so, in the future, out-of-state licensed professionals who are willing to donate their time and expertise to address the healthcare needs of Ohioans will be welcomed rather than turned away.

Chairman Burke, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 541. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Tina Staslewski