May 15, 2018

**Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 265**

**Before the Ohio Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee**

**John Covello, Director of Government Relations**

Chairman Hottinger, Vice Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Ohio Senate Insurance and Financial Institutions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 265, sponsored by Senator Dolan.

The Independent Pharmacy Cooperative (IPC) is a national trade group representing the interest of nearly 3,000 independent pharmacy store owners in all 50 states. Many of our member pharmacies reside in rural, underserved and economically disadvantaged parts of the country. These pharmacies continue to accept the responsibility of being the first point and often only source for delivering health care in their local communities.

IPC is pleased to support SB 265, which permits health insurers in the State of Ohio to cover pharmacist-provided health benefits which they are licensed to provide as a part of their professional licensure by the State of Ohio under the Ohio Pharmacy Practices Act. We thank Senator Dolan for taking the leadership on this bill to have Ohio’s health insurance coverage statutes reflect the reality that Ohio’s law has expanded practice authority of Ohio’s pharmacists. Studies have all shown that pharmacists are not only highly educated and trained to meet an array of health care needs beyond filling prescriptions, but are vastly underutilized. Underutilization often occurs because the health care payment system does not allow payment to pharmacists under a medical coverage benefit for the same services that nurses and other practitioners provide in collaboration with a physician. In fact, this very need as rectified in SB 265, has been promoted by the National Governor’s Association since their 2015 report “The Expanding Role of Pharmacists in a Transformed Health Care System.” Very simply, pharmacists, as with nurses and physician assistance, are licensed to perform a multitude of health care services. In order to help rectify the primary physician and nurses shortages, pharmacies and their pharmacists need SB 265 to ensure they can meet this health care gap in Ohio. In fact, SB 265 can end up saving money for Ohio’s health care insurance system since paying pharmacies the same as nurses to provide medical services will get patients in to care services that they may have delayed or skipped because of the wait or unavailability to see a physician.

Ohio has already seen the cost and outcome benefits of having a robust system to pay pharmacists to perform Medication Therapy Management (MTM) interventions which keeps patients on their medications and out of doctor’s offices, nursing homes and hospitals. Paying pharmacists for vital care needs to be expanded to other treatment and diagnosis areas that are in Ohio pharmacists’ practice scope. It is also important to stress this type of treatment is done in collaboration and communication with the patient’s doctor so that the patient receives the care they need when it is most convenient or accessible to them through a pharmacy. That saves time, money and focus for when a patient really needs to see a physician.

On behalf of the IPC Ohio member stores, please pass SB 265 so our member stores and their pharmacists can be part of the solution in filling in the gaps of missing health care needs for Ohio residents throughout the state, especially in the underserved rural and urban areas of Ohio.

I appreciate your consideration of IPC’s testimony and stand ready to work with the Legislature to enact SB 265.

Thank you.

John Covello