

Proponent Testimony for Senate Bill 341 (Roegner)

Joe Russell, Executive Director

Ohio Council for Home Care & Hospice

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OHIO COUNCIL
FOR HOME CARE & HOSPICE

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 341—Nurse Licensure Compact (Roegner). My name is Joe Russell and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice (OCHCH).

OCHCH represents over 600 home care, hospice, and palliative care agencies across the State of Ohio. Our members care for a variety of individuals ranging from medically fragile children, those who wish to recover at home from elective surgeries, mental health and addiction services, older Ohioans that wish to age in place, and many more.

Home health and hospice nurses are the front line caregivers that provide an array of services to those that wish to receive their care in the comfort of their own home. Home health agencies have had difficulty obtaining and maintaining a stable workforce for a variety of reasons including: Medicaid home health reimbursement rates are at the same level as they were in 1998! When the government is the payor of health care services, agencies do not have the ability to set prices like most other businesses and industries. This has made it all but impossible to recruit and retain qualified nurses and offer a marketable wage within the current pool of applicants.

Moreover, as Ohio's population continues to age, the need for more community-based nurses has risen precipitously. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the issues that providers face and has exacerbated the health care workforce shortage. The biggest factor contributing to the nursing shortage is exposure to COVID-19, which requires quarantine for up to two-weeks. Agencies are having difficulty retaining and replacing frontline staff. As a result, the need to find qualified nurses has reached an all-time high.

Our members believe that the passage of this bill could alleviate some of the workforce issues and have positive long-term outcomes if nurses from other states were recruited and allowed to practice in Ohio. We understand that there are trepidations over competency concerns with credentialed providers from other states. While that concern is not without merit, we wholeheartedly believe that having access to any licensed nurse is better than no nurse at all.

OCHCH is in support of Ohio joining the nurse licensure compact. The passage of this bill would benefit agencies to hire a capable workforce who are ready to serve vulnerable Ohioans in their home.

We want to thank Senator Roegner on her introduction of this important piece of legislation. We hope that you will join her in supporting this bill. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me at joe@ochch.org.