



St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy
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HB 558 PROPONENT TESTIMONY – MIKE ESPEL, RPh

March 8, 2022

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Liston, & Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 558.

My name is Mike Espel and I'm the former Director and founder of SVDP Charitable Pharmacy in Cincinnati Ohio (SVDPCP). I spent the last 16 years of my career at the SVDPCP program and, before that, 32 years at the Cincinnati Health Department, many of those years as its Director. In total, I've spent 47 years in underserved care. Until I retired last year, the SVDPCP filled over 600,000 prescriptions at a retail value of over \$75 million. The program has been recognized for excellence locally and on a statewide and national basis by organizations such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Henry Schein Inc, Charitable Health Network, Healthpath Foundation, Cincinnati Business Courier, and others.

The Ohio Legislature approved the existence of Charitable Pharmacies in 2005 and the Ohio Board of Pharmacy adopted rules shortly thereafter. Karon's Law (the repository law) was the first of its kind, and Ohio led the way in reducing drug waste while saving lives. In the beginning, it was not utilized by charitable organizations because of the onerous paperwork required. In approximately 2010, the Ohio Board of Pharmacy made the repository law much easier to utilize by allowing Charitable Pharmacies to collect repository medication directly from long term care pharmacies. This was a great blessing at the time! It however did not solve the increasing problem of acquiring expensive, proprietary, life-saving medications for our underserved patients.

In the early days of the SVDPCP, it was a great struggle to get these expensive, proprietary medications, particularly insulin. As a 501c3 charity, we had to rely on donated funds to operate. I am still haunted by the faces of diabetics unable to get their life sustaining insulin when I had to tell them that I had none for them. I'm convinced many of them were the folks that died later in our local hospitals and ER's.

As a current retiree and volunteer, I'm very passionate about seeing this bill enacted because I know what a game changer it would be for both underserved patients with improving their health equity and Ohio residents wanting to donate their expensive, unused medication that would otherwise go to waste. I've spoken to so many prospective donors that were disappointed and often angry when their medication donations were turned down. There is precedence for allowing these individual donations in many other states.

I'm convinced that a large portion of patients seen in hospitals and ER's are the underserved that struggle with health care and prescription access. The current management team will describe our services and explain more fully how access to individual donations will allow them to see more patients and improve the healthcare of our local underserved patients.

Please support this initiative to improve health equity in Ohio's most vulnerable population!



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Chair Lipps and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would welcome any questions you might have at this time.

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Founder & Former Director of Pharmacy

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