



January 18, 2022  
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee  
House Bill 405  
Proponent Testimony  
Michele Pomerantz  
Cuyahoga County Director of Regional Collaboration

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the Committee – thank you for the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony on House Bill 405.

This legislation focuses on the appointing authority for boards of county hospital trustees. We appreciate the willingness of the sponsors – Representatives Stewart and Johnson – to work with us and The MetroHealth System to make changes helpful for our county hospital. We also want to thank the committee for supporting the amendment incorporating those alterations into the bill.

With these changes, House Bill 405 amends Ohio Revised Code section 339.02 – the state statute governing county hospitals – in three ways that address MetroHealth’s uniqueness as a county hospital.

First, of the five county hospitals across Ohio, MetroHealth is the only system in a charter county. In the 1950s, when the Legislature crafted the state statute, the language did not contemplate a charter county structure. Currently, ORC section 339.02 defines an “Appointing authority” of a County Hospital Trustees as the board of county commissioners, the probate judge of the county senior in point of service, and the court of common pleas judge of the county senior in point of service. However, as a charter county, Cuyahoga County has a County Executive and a County Council. As a result, it has been interpreted that the Executive, with approval from the two judges, appoints the trustees while County Council confirms them. House Bill 405 codifies and clarifies this current process for a charter county hospital instead of leaving it open to interpretation.

Second, MetroHealth is the state’s largest county hospital with nearly 8,000 employees serving patients at four hospitals, four emergency departments, more than 20 health centers and 40 other sites throughout the Northeast Ohio region. With the system’s size, the current 10-person board is extremely active, with some trustees attending a couple of meetings a week while serving on multiple subcommittees. Because of such demands, HB 405 would increase a charter county hospital’s board composition by up to 15 appointed trustees – a change that would make the workload more manageable for these unpaid members.

This also could help in the recruitment of potential trustees, who might be reluctant to serve on a board requiring such a major time commitment. Further, the addition of up to 15 trustees would put the board's composition more in line with similarly sized hospitals.

Third, MetroHealth is unique blend for a county hospital as it is a large safety-net healthcare provider with seventy-five percent of its patients uninsured or covered by Medicare or Medicaid. House Bill 405 would help MetroHealth and the county enlarge their pool of potential board candidates with the kind of experience and expertise necessary to tackle issues facing this unique hospital. The legislation does that by expanding the residency requirement for a board in a charter county. The bill would permit up to two trustees of a charter county hospital to be residents outside the service area – a change that would help in MetroHealth's mission to deliver the best and most efficient healthcare to its patients.

On behalf of Cuyahoga County, I respectfully request the House State and Local Government Committee support House Bill 405 and its passage.

I want to thank each of you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michele J. Pomerantz  
Director, Regional Collaboration  
Cuyahoga County