



Senate Bill 21 – Proponent Testimony
House Transportation & Public Safety Committee
Mark Bain, MD, Cerebrovascular Center
Shazam Hussain, MD, Director, Cerebrovascular Center
Peter Rasmussen, MD, Cerebrovascular Center; Medical Director, Distance Health
Andrew N. Russman, DO, FAHA, FAAN, Medical Director, Comprehensive Stroke Center
Cleveland Clinic
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Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing Cleveland Clinic to share testimony in support of Senate Bill 21, which would create statewide guidelines for triage and transport of stroke patients.

Cleveland Clinic’s Stroke Program is one of the nation's largest stroke practices; offering comprehensive, advanced stroke treatments and a team of specialists that provide the long-term, expert care needed to regain independence after a stroke. Our stroke system includes 12 hospitals across Northeast Ohio and represents one of the most integrated systems in the country.

At Cleveland Clinic Main Campus, our Joint Commission Certified Comprehensive Stroke Center at our main campus provides life-saving care for the most complex stroke patients, including offering thrombectomy, a clot removing procedure which is one of the most effective treatments in all of medicine. This procedure is also available at our other Thrombectomy Capable Stroke Centers at Akron General Medical Center, Hillcrest Hospital and Fairview Hospital. Also, our network of eight Primary Stroke Centers and six Stroke Ready Centers use consistent protocols to ensure the best outcomes for patients. Cleveland Clinic also has one of the first Mobile Stroke Treatment Units in the country, bringing advanced stroke care to patients to shorten the time between the onset of stroke-like symptoms and the delivery of “clot-busting” – or thrombolytic – drugs.

On average, someone in the United States suffers a stroke every 40 seconds, and nearly 800,000 people suffer a new or recurrent stroke each year. Stroke is an emergency, and immediate treatment can limit brain damage, save lives and increase chances of a full recovery. In the situation of ischemic stroke, a thrombolytic agent or “clot buster” medication in the veins can be given within the first four and a half hours of the onset of stroke symptoms. For the most severe strokes caused by large blood clots, thrombectomy is a highly effective procedure utilized within hours after a stroke starts, but can only be offered at specialized centers. For these patients and those with bleeding in the brain, getting to these hospitals as quickly as possible can make the difference between life and death, and between disability and no disability.

With stroke, time remains the single most important factor, which is why establishing standardized stroke protocols through the passage of Senate Bill 21 is so critical. Patients lose 2 million brain cells a minute in the situation of a stroke, and even more in severe strokes.

Currently, patients are often transferred to the nearest hospital when experiencing a stroke. However, the nearest hospital is not always adequately equipped to handle severe stroke patients,



and may result in a patient needing to be transferred again to another hospital, thus losing valuable time (several hours) for effective treatment to be started.

Senate Bill 21 addresses this problem by requiring the development of statewide guidelines for the assessment, triage and transport of stroke patients to hospitals by emergency medical service personnel. This will lead to more efficient and effective treatment.

While we remain supportive of the bill as it stands, we also support the addition of language that addresses training to assess patients for severity of stroke and large vessel occlusion. It is most beneficial to identify severe stroke patients as they may have large vessel occlusion, and if these severe stroke patients need to be routed to higher level centers. Each minute that we delay opening a large vessel occlusion can result in more disability in our patients. With this training, all stroke patients will receive appropriate care, and the most severe stroke patients will be directed to the most appropriate center that can handle their type of stroke, without requiring an additional transfer, which can be severely detrimental to their care.

We are confident that this new legislation will help to get these severe stroke patients to the **right hospital the first time**. Once again, Cleveland Clinic voices its support for the passage of SB 21, and is thankful to its sponsors, Senator Manning and Senator Antonio. Thank you for your consideration. We can be made available to answer any questions you may have.