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The MetroHealth System
HB 405 - Proponent Testimony
Senate Local Government & Elections Committee
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Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Committee - thank you for providing The MetroHealth System the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 405. The MetroHealth System is the safety-net health system for Cuyahoga County, caring for the most underserved members of our community. We were started in 1837, when our founders centralized health care services for people suffering from the physical and mental distress associated with poverty, smallpox and cholera. Today, we continue to serve a vital need in our community by being the public health anchor institution for Northeast Ohio. While we have grown substantially over the past 180+ years, we still continue to operate as a county hospital. MetroHealth has more than 7,800 employees that provide care at four hospitals, four emergency departments, more than 20 health centers and 40 additional sites throughout Northeast Ohio. In the past year, MetroHealth has served 300,000 patients at more than 1.4 million visits. Seventy-five percent of our patients are uninsured or covered by Medicare or Medicaid.

HB 405 addresses the appointing authority for boards of county hospital trustees. We would like to thank Representatives Stewart and Johnson for working with us on our requested changes to HB 405 relating to the board of trustees of county hospitals located in a charter county. The House State & Local Government Committee accepted these changes via amendment during their committee process.

Today, there are only five county hospitals left in the state, and each is governed by a board of trustees. Of the five county hospitals, MetroHealth is the only one in a charter county and it is by far the largest county hospital in Ohio. When the Revised Code sections that created county hospitals were originally drafted in the 1950's, the delivery of health care was far different than it is today. As many of you know, county hospitals are a creature of statute and are still governed by the Ohio Revised Code. Our board of trustees requested three changes to HB 405 that allow for enhanced governance of the hospital system. In addition to my proponent testimony today, our Board of Trustees Chair, Vanessa Whiting, has submitted a letter of support for these changes to Chair Gavarone and Ranking Member Maharath.

HB 405, as passed out of the House, clarifies the appointment process for charter county hospitals. Currently, Ohio Revised Code section 339.02 does not contemplate the charter county structure. HB 405 amends Ohio Revised Code section 339.02 and



clarifies that county hospital trustees are appointed by an "Appointing Authority" which is currently defined as

- i) the board of county commissioners,
- ii) the probate judge of the county that is senior in point of service, and
- iii) the judge, other than that designated probate judge, of the court of common pleas that is senior in point of service.

Cuyahoga County's charter county form of government does not have county commissioners, instead it has a county executive and county council structure.

Since 2011, when the charter county form of government went into effect in Cuyahoga County, the language regarding county hospital trustee appointment authority has been interpreted such that instead of county commissioners appointing, the County Executive appoints, subject to confirmation by County Council. This interpretation is based on a general provision of the Cuyahoga County Charter regarding appointments.

Since Cuyahoga County's charter county form of government does not have county commissioners, we believe that the law needs to be clarified and codified to reflect the appointment of county hospital board trustees by the county executive, approval by the senior probate judge and the senior common pleas judge and confirmation by the county council.

Secondly, we support the language in section 339.02 to allow for an increase in the number of board of trustees for a county hospital in a charter county. MetroHealth's current number of board members is limited to 10. We support a change of up to 15 trustees appointed by the charter county process. MetroHealth is a large and complex organization, and it will be valuable to have the option of having up to 15 trustees on the board. The MetroHealth Board members are all unpaid and given the governance needs of a hospital system, are extremely active and dedicated. Given the limited number of trustees, each member serves on multiple subcommittees, which meet regularly. Increasing the board size will allow additional trustees with various areas of expertise to join in the governance and help spread out the work among the trustees.

Finally, we support the language in the bill that expands the residency requirement for a limited number of members appointed to the Board of Trustees. This change will permit up to two members of the Board of Trustees of a charter county hospital to be residents outside the hospital service area. This change will allow for the addition of expertise geared to the unique nature of a large, county hospital. In addition to MetroHealth being a county hospital, it is a "safety-net" hospital, with a very high Medicaid payor mix. Roughly three-quarters of our patients are covered by Medicaid or Medicare, or are uninsured, with approximately 45% being on Medicaid. This change will allow



individuals who have experience and expertise with safety-net hospitals and their particular challenges to advise hospital management as members of the board of trustees.

We request support for HB 405 and urge its passage. Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath and members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to stand before you today and I will answer your questions and provide additional commentary, if necessary. Thank you.