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Committees

State & Local
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Higher Education &
Career Readiness

Families, Aging, &
Human Services

Marilyn John
State Representative

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee: Thank you for allowing us to provide sponsor testimony on Substitute House Bill 509.

As my joint sponsor mentioned, we reviewed over 200 licenses issued by 19 boards. HB 509 renews these boards for another six years as prescribed by the Ohio Revised Code. Through the State and Local Government Committee's initial review in November and December, we found many of these 200 licenses were in good standing and had similar requirements to comparable licenses in other states. After the committee's report was adopted, my joint sponsor and I worked collaboratively with most of the boards and other stakeholders to iron out differences of opinion. Some of these changes revert the report's recommendations to what is currently in law. Others reflect a compromise reached between us and the board to balance both interests. Overall, this has been a very collaborative process.

I will now explain some of the changes this bill makes to occupational licenses and why those changes are made. First, we eliminated licenses no longer issued by the boards we reviewed. These include the temporary licensed professional clinical counselor and the temporary independent social worker license and three licenses issued by the Department of Developmental Disabilities. Second, we made a few licenses competitive with similar licenses in other states. These include reducing the number of continuing education hours for licensed pharmacists from 40 to 30 and reducing the number of continuing education hours for firefighters from 54 to 36. Originally, we had the bill written to require the local level to determine these continuing education requirements for firefighters, but changed it to 36 hours once we learned Michigan just established a 36 hour requirement.

Third, where possible, we eased requirements to obtain a license. This bill modifies the School Psychologist license issued by the Psychology Board to align it with the School Psychologist License issued by the Ohio Department of Education by reducing the number of continuing education hours, renewal fees, and frequency of renewal. We also worked with the Vision Professionals Board to change most of their license renewals from annual to biannual and reduce their renewal fees.

And finally, where possible, we eased requirements for apprentices, interns, and/or technicians to make it easier for them to start a career in those fields. This bill gives students in college the option to begin their embalmer or funeral director apprenticeship. It also removes the renewal fees for ophthalmologist and optical dispensing apprentices under the Vision Professionals Board.

We also worked with the Vision Professionals Board to enhance consumer protections and safety. This bill allows the board to issue cease and desist orders to people who have engaged in the practice of optometry without a license. The board brought to our attention several examples of gas stations, beauty supplies stores, and Halloween stores selling substandard contacts on their premises without an optician present.

Finally, as my joint sponsor mentioned, in keeping our goal of breaking down barriers and competitively aligning our licenses to those in surrounding states, this bill requires each of the occupational licensing boards reviewed in this General Assembly to submit a report within six months of the bill's effective date.

Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Williams, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for your time, and we are happy to answer any questions.