



**House Bill 136 – Proponent Testimony
House Health Provider Services Committee**

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Chair Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the Ohio House Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 136, which would authorize the operation of remote dispensing pharmacies in Ohio.

We operate 18 outpatient pharmacies within the Cleveland Clinic Health System and each of our pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are committed to putting our Patients First. Our focus is on delivering quick and accurate prescription services while educating patients on the importance of their medication therapy. We are committed to excellence at Cleveland Clinic by enabling and empowering each individual in the Department of Pharmacy to make valuable contributions to patient-focused care, teaching, and research activities. Employees demonstrate this commitment by continuously re-evaluating goals, objectives and responsibilities while embracing change in a positive attitude with respect for other supporting members of our team.

While many of our pharmacies are located in more densely populated areas such as Cleveland, Akron, and Canton, the Cleveland Clinic footprint also extends into more rural areas of the state, including Tuscarawas, Wayne, and Medina Counties. These areas may have limited access to healthcare compared to more urban and suburban parts of the state, which is why policy solutions such as House Bill 136 are important to consider when looking to increase access and improve health outcomes.

House Bill 136 would allow Cleveland Clinic and other health systems to operate a pharmacy in a way that utilizes technology while still maintaining a care team model that is the cornerstone of our work. In a remote dispensing pharmacy, a supervising pharmacist uses a telepharmacy system to remotely monitor the dispensing of drugs and therapy related devices. The supervising pharmacist may also counsel patients and provide other pharmacist care. In order to operate as a remote dispensing pharmacy, the pharmacy must be licensed by the State Pharmacy Board and must be staffed by two or more pharmacy interns or certified pharmacy technicians who meet qualifications and training requirements established by the Board of Pharmacy in rules. Additional safeguards are also incorporated in the bill's language to ensure that patients are receiving the highest quality of care possible. For instance, the supervising pharmacist would be required to verify that each dispensed drug complies with the prescription before the medication leaves the store.

Creating remote dispensing pharmacies is particularly helpful as we experience a workforce shortage not just at the Cleveland Clinic, but throughout the state and the country. Rather than being forced to close or consolidate pharmacies in areas where there may be a smaller available workforce, House Bill 136 could provide alternative methods to ensure that Ohioans remain healthy without the need for extensive and disruptive travel.



An example of where House Bill 136 could improve access to care is Cleveland Clinic's Wooster location. Pharmacist turnover due to the rural location creates a significant challenge in maintaining needed services. This is not uncommon in our industry and a recent study of the pharmacy workforce noted nearly 10% of pharmacists leave their position due to the location¹. The ability to staff our Wooster pharmacy with a supervising pharmacist working remotely would mean patients have consistent access to necessary medications and pharmacist expertise. Further, an inability to adequately staff this location results in the increase potential for burnout as other pharmacists rotate to cover, adding stress on an already stressed workforce.

In the same study noted above, up to 60% of hospitals report a shortage of pharmacists depending upon specialization and experience. Opportunities afforded by House Bill 136 would allow for more remote work options which is a major draw for candidates and leads to increased employee satisfaction.

Once again, Cleveland Clinic is supportive of House Bill 136, and we ask the committee to be supportive as well. We are thankful to the sponsors, Representatives Holmes and Stewart, for introducing this important legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

1. Pedersen CA, et al. ASHP National Survey of Pharmacy Practice in Hospital Settings: Workforce – 2022. Am J Health-Syst Pharm. 2023;80:719-741.

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