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Chairman Swearingen and Members of the Health Provider Services Committee, thank you for affording me the time to give sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 60, critical legislation that will utilize the expertise of Ohio's higher education institutions to address the workforce shortage that is currently contributing to the mental health crisis in our state.

As we all know, Ohio and our nation face a mounting mental health crisis that is only being exacerbated by a declining mental health workforce. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration, between 2016 and 2030, Ohio is projected to lose over 300 psychiatrists. This will leave the state with just 1,060 psychiatrists—52% of the number needed.¹ To further put this into perspective, Ohio has 135 mental health professional shortage areas, making us 15th worst in the nation (NEOMED).² Quite simply, we are at a critical point where the demand for mental healthcare services vastly outpaces the current and projected workforce. We need to do better.

Therefore, what we have in front of us today is an innovative solution to a fast-growing problem. Senate Bill 60 will create a new license, certified mental health assistants or CMHA. A CMHA will work under the supervision of a physician, with whom they will meet with weekly or more frequently, if needed, for cases that are more critical. Essentially, a CMHA will act as an extension of a Physician so that they can free up that doctor to see new patients or those who are experiencing a mental health crisis. This creates an environment where patients that have been waiting weeks or months will be seen more frequently since we have now freed up some time for Physicians through a CMHA.

While the CMHA will be acting as a physician extender, limits were placed on a CMHA's prescribing and practice privileges. Moreover, a CMHA can be compared to a Physician Assistant, but with the key difference being that CMHA is solely focused on mental health.

I would like to thank Northeast Ohio Medical University for their diligent work on this program and thinking outside the box for an innovative way to address this issue. I would also like to thank the Ohio State Medical Association for working with me on this legislation and all their time and effort to get the language right.

Chairman Swearingen, thank you again for allowing me to give sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 60 today. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.

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1. Health Resource and Services Administration, "State-Level Projections of supply and Demand for Behavioral Health Occupations: 2016-2030", September 2018.
 2. Northeast Ohio Medical University, "Certified Mental health Assistant: Physician Extender to address Workforce".