

Good afternoon and thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. My name is Carla Smith, and I have been a registered nurse for 17 years. For nearly 10 of those years, I have practiced as a flight nurse, most previously employed with MedFlight of Ohio. On April 26, 2022, I suffered a body fluid exposure while caring for a patient. More specifically, body fluids were splashed into my eyes. I was treated at a local hospital, which included testing for bloodborne pathogens, such as hepatitis A/B and HIV. This also includes antiviral treatment when necessary. This claim was initially denied by the Bureau of Worker's Compensation because, according to Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 4123.026, this coverage only applies to first responders, which is later identified in part A of the code as peace officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and correctional officers. This was later overturned in a hearing because I am also a licensed paramedic, but not before the worker's compensation representative challenged that even though I am a paramedic, I was not functioning in such capacity on that day. Many of my colleagues, however, are not dual licensed, and thus would not fall under the protection of the ORC and Worker's Compensation. Furthermore, to support this request, I would like to note that ORC 4766-5-13 requires a rotorcraft or fixed wing to be staffed with a licensed physician or nurse. This conflict alone clearly demonstrates a need for revision. I am here today, in support of SB 106. In hope that, my experience will help you better understand the need to amend ORC 4123 to provide coverage for my colleagues to continue to serve the public with the same protection as other first responders.

