



SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE

Testimony of Stephanie M. Loucka, Executive Director, State Medical Board
of Ohio
April 26, 2023

Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about Governor DeWine's Executive Budget and about the State Medical Board's budget initiatives for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. The State Medical Board of Ohio (SMBO, the board) has put forth a proposal that has zero draw from Ohio's general revenue funds, emphasizes public safety, and supports responsible human capital management.

It is the Medical Board's mission to protect and enhance the health and safety of the public through effective medical regulation. The board accomplishes this through its authority to license, regulate and discipline Ohio's physicians, physician assistants and other allied healthcare professionals. The board's goals aim to:

- Ensure persons practicing medicine meet sufficient standards of education, training, competence, and ethics.
- Define and advocate for standards of safe medical practice.
- Prohibit persons from practicing medicine whose violations are so egregious as to forfeit the privilege.
- Provide information about the licensees of the board, the board's functions and operations, and the laws governing the practice of medicine.
- Achieve and maintain the highest possible levels of organizational efficacy.

Currently, the SMBO licenses and regulates 10 different professions, totaling approximately 95,000 licensed medical professionals, representing a growth in licensing volume of approximately 37 percent over the past 5 years, and 47 percent over the past decade. Additionally, on August 2, 2022, the board successfully implemented the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, growing Ohio's workforce and increasing healthcare access with out-of-state physicians.

State Medical Board of Ohio: Current Biennium Focus

In addition to important policy initiatives such as expanding telehealth and implementation of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, the Medical Board has continued to strengthen protocols to protect the public, staff positions in the investigations, enforcement, and hearing units, and improve data collection to demonstrate the board's efficacy to the public. With the continued increase in licensees and complaints against licensees, the board requested additional staff positions in the FY22-23 biennial budget for the first time since the 1990's.

The board has prioritized a strategic staffing plan that increases synchronization between the

investigations and enforcement processes. This executed plan included the addition of three investigators, who prioritize sexual misconduct complaints, one enforcement attorney with a background in sexual abuse cases, and a victim coordinator. As a result, the board has:

- Continued to increase enforcement productivity.
- Increased citations by more than 100 percent in the last four years and total board actions have increased 50 percent in the same timeframe.
- Adopted new sexual misconduct investigation and triage protocols.
- Coordinated partnership between investigations staff and enforcement attorneys.
- Cultivated relationships with law enforcement and other agencies across the state.
- Continued training for investigations and enforcement staff around handling complaints against licensees who violate the trust of the public.

State Medical Board of Ohio: Looking Forward

While the board has increased staff for the first time in 30 years, more resources are needed to address the increase in number of and complexity of complaints. These additional resources will allow us to improve upon the handling of egregious complaints, particularly those involving sexual abuse, and to engage in a public information campaign to ensure Ohio's citizens know how to contact the Board and how the Medical Board works to keep them safe from dangerous providers. Through this point of the biennium, new licenses issued by the SMBO have increased by approximately 20 percent over the last biennium. Along with this year over year increase of licensees, the board receives over 6,000 complaints annually. Today, our enforcement attorneys are carrying dockets of approximately 40 open cases. The increasing enforcement activities are unsustainable. We must also ensure individuals who harm patients receive appropriate, effective discipline, up to and including licensure revocation. Finally, we must ensure an efficient, fair resolution for all our licensees.

This budget proposal allows the board to add additional positions to our investigative and enforcement teams. More specifically we will be adding two additional investigators and two additional specialized attorneys to help support our work in handling sexual misconduct complaints. Most importantly, these additional staff members will ensure that the ever-increasing demand will not result in a regression on our current progress. This budget proposal of \$13,791,789 in FY24 and \$14,315,005 in FY25 allows us to support these critical additions.

Conclusion

The proposed operating budget allows us to continue to meet and exceed the expectations of our licensees and the citizens of Ohio. It enables us to expand our current staffing, while providing necessary assistance in key areas. The board's projected revenue supports these additional, critical positions, without any impact on the general revenue fund and without raising licensure fees.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak to you today. I will gladly answer any questions you have at this time.