



Meredith Craig, Director of Healthcare Policy
Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Proponent – Senate Bill 144
October 11, 2023

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to express the Ohio Chamber of Commerce's (OCC) support of Senate Bill 144.

As you may know, the Ohio Chamber has served as the state's leading business advocate, and we represent over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness, and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans. In our efforts to support economic competitiveness and growth, the Ohio Chamber supports Senate Bill 144 because it expands Ohioans' access to routine healthcare services.

Senate Bill 144 would adopt language from the federal Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act, allowing Ohioans the option to continue accessing childhood vaccines at a pharmacy, without a doctor's referral first. This pharmacy care took place for three years until the federal public health emergency (PHE) ended on May 11, 2023. During these three years, it became clear that there was a need for more vaccine providers and parents leveraged the opportunity to get those routine vaccinations for their children at their local pharmacy. Current law, which was suspended during the PHE, requires parents to get a referral from a doctor before they can take their child to get a vaccine at a pharmacy. This is unnecessary and burdensome, as state law already requires pharmacies to notify vaccination history to a patient's primary care physician.

In the Chamber's recent publication, *[Blueprint for Ohio's Economic Future](#)*, we highlight the need to transform Ohio's healthcare system by enhancing delivery of services to reduce costs and improve health outcomes. Statewide, there is an average of .77 primary care physicians (PCPs) per 1,000 Ohioans. In rural counties, the ratio is as low as .07. This study demonstrates the importance of increasing access to quality healthcare for all individuals, such as allowing access to childhood vaccinations at a pharmacy. This simple, common-sense measure will help ensure families can receive timeliness and routine healthcare.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide support for Senate Bill 144. The Ohio Chamber urges swift passage of this legislation.