



**Senate Bill 144 – Proponent Testimony
Ohio Senate Health Committee**

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Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Health Committee, thank you for allowing Cleveland Clinic to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 144, which would allow pharmacists, pharmacy interns, and pharmacy technicians to administer immunizations beginning when a child is five. Our names are Camille Sabella, MD (Director of the Center for Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Cleveland Clinic Children’s), Allison Riffle (Interim Chief Pharmacy Officer for Cleveland Clinic), and Kaitlyn Rivard, PharmD (Pharmacy Clinical Specialist at Cleveland Clinic).

Our staff of 400 full-time pediatricians and pediatric specialists see more than 500,000 pediatric visits each year and provide hospital care for an average of 218 children and adolescents per day. We provide pediatric services at our Main and Hospital for Rehabilitation campuses, at several of our community hospitals, at our Family Health Centers, and at other locations in the community.

An essential component to a child’s health is staying up-to-date with immunizations to help protect children from getting a number of illnesses. These vaccines are very safe and can help prevent easily-spread diseases that can cause serious health problems. Senate Bill 144 would offer parents additional options for their children aged five and older to obtain important immunizations such as influenza, inactivated poliovirus (IPV), diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis (DTaP), and measles, mumps & rubella (MMR), to name a few. Allowing additional providers such as pharmacist interns and pharmacist technicians to administer these immunizations and lowering the age of eligibility to five (as opposed to the current age of seven) will ensure that more children will receive their much-needed immunizations.

Several studies and data sources underscore the importance of ensuring every avenue to increase a child’s access to vaccinations:

- **Only 71% of children in Ohio** received their combined 7-vaccine series by 35 months of age. Allowing pharmacy personnel to vaccinate children starting at 5 years of age would provide additional opportunities for “catch-up” vaccination for Ohio’s children. (Source: [CDC ChildVaxView](#)).
- Pharmacies in Michigan have been instrumental in **increasing access to the HPV vaccine** for adolescents, protecting against the spread of HPV infection and related cancers. (Source: [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Pharmacists Association](#)).
- Approximately 80% of **physicians and parents endorsed** pharmacist-provided HPV vaccination, if the pharmacists had completed vaccination training, reported vaccine

administrations to the primary care provider (PCP), and referred adolescents to their PCPs for other health services (as required by SB 144). (Source: Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev. 2018 Aug;27(8):970-978, doi: 10.1158/1055-9965.EPI-18-0380).

- Approximately 2/3 of **parents endorse** willingness to get the influenza vaccine for their adolescent child at a pharmacy. (Source: Prev Med. 2017 Jun;99:251-256, doi: 10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.02.003).
- **Ohio's vaccine deserts** (>15 minute drive) limited the opportunity for children to receive vaccinations for COVID-19. (Source: Vaccine Equity Planner).
- At Cleveland Clinic, the majority of pediatric influenza and COVID-19 vaccines are administered outside of a regular pediatrician visit. They are administered at **nurse managed flu and COVID-19 vaccine clinics**. (Source: internal data).
- There are **no published data that demonstrate a decrease in pediatrician visits** in states where a broad range of childhood vaccinations are administered by pharmacy personnel.

Passage of Senate Bill 144 will increase access and options, as pharmacies operate at expanded hours and in more locations than most pediatricians' offices. For instance, we have 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.

In addition, if a pharmacist learns that a child has no primary care provider during this process, the bill would require the pharmacists to inform the parent on the importance of child well-visits and make a referral to a pediatrician. This creates a partnership between pharmacies and providers to help fill in the gaps in vaccine access while directing patients without a primary care provider or pediatrician into the system.

Once again, Cleveland Clinic supports Senate Bill 144 and urges the committee to be supportive as well. We thank the sponsor, Senator Mark Romanchuk, for introducing this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.