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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee:

On behalf of our over 240 stores and more than 6,300 employees in Ohio, Walgreens appreciates the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 144. This bill will allow for the continuation of access that was provided to Ohioans during the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to immunize the full range of routine vaccinations to those ages 5 and above.

Walgreens was at the forefront of administering vaccines, both by pharmacists and technicians during the COVID-19 pandemic as the Federal government gave pharmacists and technicians the ability to immunize down to age 3 under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act. The PREP Act helped provide increased access to these lifesaving vaccines.

Notably, this bill requires pharmacists to inform the parents of a minor that a well-child visit with their pediatrician or family doctor is still necessary, as well as require the pharmacy to report the immunization to the patient's primary care doctor. In no way, does getting a vaccine at a pharmacy replace a visit to a physician, but instead provides a convenient access point to Ohioans who are, because of the PREP Act, used to and comfortable getting their routine vaccinations at their local pharmacy.

Empowering pharmacists to provide quality and safe care as well as optimize the use of pharmacy technicians as they work to meet increased demand for vaccine services is vitally important. Walgreens urges the committee to support SB 144.

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