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**Ohio Chamber of Commerce**  
*Proponent – Senate Bill 60*  
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Chairman Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to emphasize the Ohio Chamber of Commerce's (OCC) support of Senate Bill 60.

As discussed earlier this year during proponent testimony, one of the most consistent themes we hear from our member companies, across nearly every sector of healthcare, is difficulty finding workforce talent. One of our state's biggest problems in this space is the severe shortage of behavioral health professionals, which is why the OCC is a huge proponent of both Senate Bill 60 and House Bill 97 – identical companion bills to create a new licensed healthcare professional called a Certified Mental Health Assistant. This program, spearheaded by the Northeast Ohio Medical University or NEOMED, would offer prospective students a new licensure pathway to specialize in mental health and substance abuse disorders. This innovative solution to an escalating problem is exactly what our state needs to grow its behavioral health workforce.

In the Chamber's recent publication, [\*Blueprint for Ohio's Economic Future\*](#), we highlight the need to increase access to addiction treatment, harm reduction, and mental health services. In partnership with Accenture, our study demonstrates the importance of the business community supporting statewide campaigns to address the stigma of addiction, and evidence-based treatment and recovery services. This requires that all areas of the state have access to quality and effective behavioral health services. Ultimately, Ohio must address the shortage of personnel in behavioral health and recovery support services. Because workforce demand and access to behavioral health treatment is critical to our members, this legislation is one of our top policy priorities for the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide support for Senate Bill 60. Investing in mental health and safety is critical to building solid workplaces, a strong workforce, and strong communities.