

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide my personal opponent testimony on House Bill 12.

My name is Erica Carlson and I graduated from Ohio Northern University with my Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) degree in May of 2024. I am currently a pharmacy residency at OhioHealth Riverside Methodist Hospital, where I work closely with members of the medical team to manage patient medications while they are hospitalized. I am writing to express my concern that House Bill 12 will harm the Ohio patients whom I care for.

As a new pharmacist, my biggest concern surrounding House Bill 12 is that it “requires” pharmacists to dispense ANY off-label prescription they receive. Off-label prescribing already exists and is beneficial for many patients. Pharmacists are not against off-label prescribing. However, pharmacists are champions of using evidence-based medicine to guide the practice of off-label prescribing. Evidence-based medicine means using scientific research and data that has been collected in a moral and ethical manner to guide treatment decisions. Evidence-based medicine means that a medication has proven to be effective and safe for patients. Evidence-based medicine is the line between using a medication for a legitimate medical purpose with scientific evidence and putting patients in danger by disregarding the adverse effects that come with many medications. This bill concerns me because it dissolves evidence-based medicine in off-label prescribing and it directly contradicts my legal responsibility to keep patients safe.

Although this bill masquerades as a way for patients to advocate for their health and make their own treatment decisions, in reality this bill will cause more harm than good. House Bill 12 would require pharmacists to dispense medicines even if they do not have necessary bloodwork to make sure that the dose is safe for their kidney or liver function; to use medicines that can, for instance, cause low blood pressure, falls, seizures, internal bleeding, and more in situations where the medicine has no use or benefit; to use medicines at doses that will be toxic to the patient and lead to end-organ failure; to use medicines that are unsafe in our older patients, pregnant patients, and children; and many more harmful situations. House Bill 12 sponsors suggest that the bill preserves patient access to medications that might help them, but these medications are already available to them via off-label prescribing and dispensing; the true consequences of House Bill 12 are not to broaden access but to instead create highways to harm. In preventing pharmacists from executing their lawful duty and keeping them from refusing to dispense medications on the grounds of scientific objection, House Bill 12 removes the last line of defense for patients and, in doing so, will undoubtedly lead to harm.

Pharmacists spend 8 to 10 years training to be the expert in medication safety. We need to trust not only pharmacists, but every professional to do the job they were trained to do. For example, we trust firefighters, mechanics, engineers, politicians, and architects to be the professional in their field. We trust them to keep the general population safe using the knowledge and skills they have gained from a lifetime of service and training. Ignoring their expertise would cause significant harm. The same is true in medicine. We should trust physicians and APPs to prescribe and pharmacists to verify the medication is indeed safe and effective for the illness we are treating. We should trust that healthcare professionals are already advocates for patients, but

are also always aiming to empower and educate patients, so they can become their own advocates as well.

Fortunately, thanks to the collaborative nature of healthcare in Ohio, I do not often need to exercise my duty to refuse to dispense a medication given that any issues are usually things that can be overcome with mutual discussion. However, my concern with HB 12 is that, by taking away my ability to refuse to dispense a medication that is not scientifically appropriate, it will open the door for numerous individuals who may wish to take advantage of Ohio patients. Bad actors will now be able to come to Ohio to transform our patients into business opportunities to sell any snake oil you can imagine because House Bill 12 will force pharmacists all over the state to dispense drugs that range from ineffective to outright harmful. Given that off-label medication use already happens every single day, the only thing that House Bill 12 will do is to increase the situations where I might need to refuse to dispense a medication while taking away my ability to do so. This bill is only going to allow our most vulnerable patients to be at a greater risk of being scammed and harmed by dangerous drugs.

Every pharmacist in Ohio has a legal responsibility to ensure every prescription they dispense was written by a legitimate prescriber for a legitimate medical purpose (per OAC Rule 4729:5-5-15). In addition, pharmacists complete a drug utilization review with each prescription. We review the patient's profile, medications, and health conditions to check that this medication will not cause undue harm. We are legally required to prevent harm by completing this review, but House Bill 12 will contradict this legal precedent and take away our ability to act in those situations. This is what makes the bill dangerous. It allows medication errors to go uncorrected. Medication errors that cause harm to patients happen every day, despite our best efforts. Just imagine how many more would happen without a pharmacist. How many people would have a medication that worsens their heart failure or causes them to become dizzy and fall or interacts with another drug they take and causes fatal respiratory depression or makes them more susceptible to infection or leads to a fatal bleed? The role of the pharmacist legally exists to prevent these deadly and costly medication errors, but House Bill 12 seeks to abolish this role and cause more undue harm to innocent and unknowing patients across the state of Ohio. I strongly urge you to oppose House Bill 12 and trust pharmacists to do the job they have devoted their lives to: keeping patients safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns and **opposition to House Bill 12** and for your time appreciating how harmful it will be to the people of Ohio.

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