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Testimony of Dr. Henry Wehrum, DO

Ohio Osteopathic Association

Opponent – House Bill 353

House Health Committee

Chairwoman Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide remarks on House Bill 353. My mane is Henry Wehrum and I am an Osteopathic Physician specializing in Nephrology. I am here today on behalf of the members of the Ohio Osteopathic Association to express concerns with House Bill 353.

First, it is important to note that health care providers – physicians and non-physicians alike – often work together to provide team-based care to patients. The physician-led team is the best model of care and physician assistants are an important part of that team. I personally utilize and interact with physician assistants in my practice, and I greatly appreciate their expertise and passion. While we may disagree on this piece of legislation, we all work together to keep our patients healthy.

As you know, House Bill 353 would change the title of physician assistants to 'physician associates' throughout the Ohio Revised Code. This legislation does not modify the title of physician assistant as it relates to Medicare, Medicaid, or health insurance. The Ohio Osteopathic Association is concerned that this change will only seek to confuse patients

By replacing the use of 'assistant' with 'associate' I believe this bill will blur well-established roles within the health care team. The term 'physician associate' may lead patients to incorrectly assume they are being treated by a provider with training and education equivalent to that of a physician. Patients, especially when being treated in a hospital, will often interact with multiple health care providers. The use

of familiar and consistent terminology and titles is essential to avoid confusion about who is responsible for diagnosis and treatment. Simply put, equating non-physician titles more closely with physicians devalues the education and training that DO's possess.

In closing, I want to stress that physician assistants are valuable members of the health care team. Our opposition to House Bill 353 should in no way be construed as a lack of respect or appreciation for physician assistants and other advanced practice providers. However, this legislation is a solution in search of a problem. Patients understand the role of physicians, physician assistants, and other providers and we should preserve titles that protect those roles.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.