



SUPPORT TESTIMONY FOR HB 447 – DAMAGES REFORM AND PATIENT RIGHTS

Chairman Thomas, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Synenberg, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee, thank you for hearing my support testimony for HB 447.

Ohio's current limits on noneconomic damages—set almost twenty years ago—no longer match today's realities. These limits fail to reflect what victims truly experience after severe injuries or losses. Pain, suffering, and loss of quality of life are not just numbers on a page; they represent real people who may never walk again, who live with chronic pain, or who have lost someone they love because of preventable mistakes. The existing cap unfairly minimizes their suffering and takes power away from juries who are meant to deliver fair justice.

HB 447 simply updates those limits to account for inflation since they were first established two decades ago. Every Ohioan feels the effects of rising costs—imagine how much harder it is for someone facing lifelong medical expenses and ongoing pain.

This bill does **not** eliminate damage caps; it raises them to a more reasonable level that respects the rights of injured Ohioans while still maintaining safeguards against excessive awards.

Accountability builds trust in our healthcare system. When a provider or institution fails to meet their duty of care, patients deserve meaningful access to justice. HB 447 helps ensure that access and reinforces the value of every Ohioan's health and dignity.

The bill also impacts cases involving **discrimination based on religious beliefs**. For example, a Michigan woman was fired for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine due to her faith and later won her case. More than \$1 million of that jury's award was for noneconomic damages. Under Ohio's current law, a judge would be required to reduce that to \$250,000. HB 447 would raise that limit to \$413,000—still not ideal, but a clear step in the right direction toward protecting individual rights.

Ohio Advocates for Medical Freedom respectfully urges a YES vote on HB 447.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Stock
President, Ohio Advocates for Medical Freedom