

Testimony Before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

May 23, 2025

House Bill 96 – State Operating Budget

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 96. My name is Wezlynn Davis. I serve as a Jerome Township Trustee and a Union County GOP Central Committee Woman. However, I am here today not in those roles, but as a small business owner in Ohio — not in the pharmaceutical industry, but someone who understands what it takes to keep a business running and successful.

Independent pharmacies are vital to Ohio's small towns and rural communities, especially where large chains won't go. These small businesses provide access to critical medications, and they're being squeezed out of existence by Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs). These powerful intermediaries dictate terms that make it nearly impossible for local pharmacies to survive.

Those who benefit from the current system will tell you that ensuring our local pharmacies get a fair payment — a simple \$10 dispensing fee — is somehow a new cost or an affront to the free market. But this fee is not a cost increase — it is offset by savings elsewhere in the system. By paying pharmacies the actual cost of drugs and a fair fee to dispense them, we eliminate the hidden profits of PBMs and replicate the same cost-saving success we've seen in

Ohio's Medicaid program. You can pay the cost of the drug and the cost to dispense — and still save money. This is not theoretical; it's already proven in practice. We must preserve these savings and this fairness by keeping the House amendment in HB96.

This is not abstract. A pharmacist in my own community, who operated four local pharmacies, was forced to shut down due to unsustainable reimbursement practices. This is not an isolated case. These closures are a direct result of a broken system.

By removing PBMs from the Medicaid pharmacy benefit, Ohio saved \$140 million. Taxpayer dollars were preserved, and pharmacies were paid fairly. We cannot allow regression on this front. Reinstating PBMs threatens to undo real savings and real access for Ohioans.

When pharmacies close, especially in rural areas, it's not just a business loss — it's a loss of access to essential care. Ohioans face long drives and fewer options. HB96 ensures your zip code doesn't determine your ability to get medication.

This isn't about special treatment — it's about a level playing field. HB96 restores fairness, curbs monopoly power, and ensures economic freedom for Ohio's small businesses. Support the House amendment. Protect Ohio's independent pharmacies.

Thank you for accepting my testimony.

Sincerely,

Wezlynn Davis

Small Business Owner

Jerome Township Trustee

Union County GOP Central Committee Woman

Jerome Township, Ohio