Proponent Testimony HB 324
Senate Health Committee
Catholic Conference of Ohio
May 20, 2026

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 324. My name is Marsha Forson, and I am an Associate Director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Conference is the official voice of the Catholic Church in Ohio on matters of public policy.

"The Church has always considered serving the sick to be 'an integral part of her mission,' combining 'the preaching of the Good News with the help and care of the sick." Healthcare workers are held in high esteem, given their call to be, as the Church's Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers states, "guardians and servants of human life." Those who work in health care policy also share in an important mission to "defend and promote the common good, [by] performing the duty of justice." This justice requires ensuring that those who are most in need have access to medical care and that the inviolable dignity of each person is respected.

Further, the Church maintains that medical treatments are "directed not only to the good and the health of the body, but to the [whole] person", including his or her physical, mental, and spiritual restoration. Due regard for the dignity of human life and the integral good of each person warrants the consideration of prudent measures for dispensing pharmaceuticals. This is especially the case when a medication causes effects that severely disturb the bodily integrity of the person. The Church upholds the principle of proportionality in treatment as a judicious means for weighing these considerations. While medications with adverse effects may be legitimately administered, it is important that there be "due proportion between the means employed and therapeutic effectiveness." Alongside the proportionality principle, it is also important that the patient has "as complete a view as possible of … [the] ailment and the possible treatments, with the risks, difficulties and consequences that they involve."

Our technological age has brought with it many welcome advancements, including in the practice of telemedicine. However, it is paramount that we do not lose sight of the personalistic and holistic dimension of healthcare. If an individual is experiencing a health event that is serious enough to warrant consideration of consequential interventions, appropriate means should be taken to ensure the patient is personally accompanied and assessed. The Church further clarifies a physician's responsibility, "such a relationship with the sick person, with full respect for ... autonomy, requires availability, attention, understanding, empathy, and dialogue, together with expertise, competence, and professional ethics. That is to say, it must be the expression of a profoundly human commitment, made and carried out not just as a technical activity but as an act of dedication and love of neighbor."

HB 324 employs reasonable safeguards on the dispensing of medications known to cause serious adverse effects by requiring that patients be assessed and fully informed as to the associated risks in order to be free to consent to a recommended course of treatment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify for HB 324.