

May 13, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 96 – Access to Vagus Nerve Stimulation for Drug-Resistant Epilepsy

Dear esteemed committee members:

My name is Dr. Junaid Akbani. I am a board-certified Vascular Surgeon and I have served the Toledo, Ohio community for over 10 years, providing specialized care for children and adults with complex neurological and vascular conditions, including surgical management and implantation of Vagus Nerve Stimulator devices for management of drug-resistant epilepsy (DRE). I am writing today in strong support of House Bill 96.

Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) therapy is a proven and effective adjunctive treatment for patients with DRE. Over the years, I have implanted numerous patients with VNS, and many of them have experienced meaningful seizure reduction and improvements in quality of life—becoming more alert, communicative, and independent. VNS can reduce the burden of epilepsy not only for patients but for families and the healthcare system overall by decreasing emergency visits and hospital admissions. **Recently I implanted this device in a 9-year-old who had to be taken out of school because his seizures were getting out of control. Mother had to stop working and take care of him at home. After implantation, within weeks he was back at school seizure free.**

Access to this treatment, however, remains a challenge—particularly for Medicaid recipients. The limitations on Medicaid coverage for VNS therapy prevent many patients from receiving this potentially life-changing option. House Bill 96 is a necessary step toward correcting this inequity and ensuring that all eligible patients, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to comprehensive epilepsy care.

I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 96 and help expand access to VNS therapy for Medicaid patients living with drug-resistant epilepsy.

Thank you once again for your time and attention to this critical matter.
Sincerely,



Junaid Akbani, MD

Chief of Vascular Surgery

Mercy Health, St. Vincent Medical Center