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**Health Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
Proponent Testimony
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Room 121**

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the House Health Committee –

My name is Dr. Catherine Flaitz and I am the Division Chief of Dentistry at Nationwide Children's Hospital and Professor and Chair of the Division of Pediatric Dentistry at The Ohio State University College of Dentistry. I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide proponent testimony in favor of House Bill 184.

At Nationwide Children's Hospital's dental clinic, we have pediatric dentists and specialists who provide comprehensive preventive and therapeutic oral health care for infants and children, including those with special health care needs. We are one of the largest dental safety net clinics in Ohio treating children from all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. We are also active with community outreach in order to extend our reach into under-served communities throughout central Ohio and beyond.

We are excited about all aspects of House Bill 184 – including the potential for expanded scholarships and loan repayment opportunities and the streamlining of the oral health access supervision program which allows hygienists and expanded function dental assistants – also known as EFDAs - to provide prevention services in various public health settings.

We are particularly interested in the provisions related to tele-dentistry. Nationwide Children's Hospital recently built a brand new dental facility here in Columbus off of Livingston Avenue in which we have invested in state-of-the-art technology to enhance our ability to provide care. The provisions of House Bill 184 will allow us to leverage that technology to enhance our ability extend care into underserved communities.

Innovative uses of technology provide great promise for extending care in non-traditional ways. In fact, a recent report from the Center for Health Workforce Studies at the School of Public Health at the State University of New York at Albany concluded that “a review of the scientific literature on tele-dentistry found it to be a promising and effective strategy for increasing access to services in both rural and urban settings.”

Through the use of technology, our dentists will be able to remotely supervise dental hygienists and expanded function dental assistants as they perform their prevention

services in various community settings. The technology will also allow the supervising dentist to examine the patient and determine if further care is needed.

House Bill 184 also allows the dentist to direct the dental hygienist or EFDA to perform two specific procedures that will address dental decay if appropriate. This new provision permits the dentist to authorize the dental hygienist or EFDA, with specific training, to perform interim therapeutic restorations or apply Silver Diamine Fluoride. These services are non-invasive procedures that help treat and arrest decay and also relieve patients of any pain or discomfort they are experiencing.

The use of Silver Diamine Fluoride – or SDF – is particularly exciting in this context. The application of SDF can easily be taught and once a dentist diagnoses the need for the application, the hygienists or EFDA may apply the SDF in a manner that is similar to the application of fluoride varnish which they do all of the time. Research shows that SDF is a relatively inexpensive way to effectively control and manage cavities as it seals off and arrests the decay, oftentimes also relieving pain. This strategy is particularly effective in providing temporary relief until the patient is in a better position or setting for more invasive and extensive treatment. House Bill 184 will also permit the dentist when appropriate to prescribe an antibiotic through tele-dentistry to further relieve patients' discomfort and treat infection.

In summary, we are excited that the provisions of House Bill 184 will allow us to begin to utilize technology in innovative ways as we further develop strategies to extend care into underserved communities in a responsible manner. Nationwide Children's Hospital's Dental Division takes our responsibility to treat all patients in a compassionate and effective manner very seriously. We look forward to working with Ohio's policymakers and our partners in the dental community as we utilize the provisions contained in House Bill 184 to further address access to dental care in Ohio.

Thank you for your attention, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have at the appropriate time.