



**State Representative Rick Carfagna
68th House District**

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 111.

This legislation seeks to add advanced practice registered nurses (or APRNs) with a psychiatric/mental health subspecialty to the list of authorized professionals who are able to have an individual involuntarily transported to a hospital for a mental health examination.

As some of you may recall, this piece of legislation was introduced during the 131st General Assembly by my predecessor, Margaret Ann Ruhl. Although it was not able to make it through the Senate, that legislation received no opposition. Just as it did last General Assembly, House Bill 111 received strong bipartisan support with a 96-0 floor vote in March of this year.

Current Ohio law authorizes psychiatrists, licensed clinical psychologists, licensed physicians, health officers, parole officers, police officers, and sheriffs to have an individual involuntarily transferred to a hospital for up to twenty-four hours for a mental health examination if there is evidence that the individual represents a substantial risk of physical harm to self or others. Adding qualified advanced practice registered nurses to that list of authorized professionals will allow for faster and more efficient care, and improve the safety of both the individual and the surrounding community.

There are presently around 450-500 APRNs with a psychiatric subspecialty in the state of Ohio. To become an APRN with a psychiatric subspecialty, an RN must obtain a graduate degree with a major in a nursing specialty or related field. The individual then must sit for a national certification examination, and obtain a Certificate of Authority from the state. The Certificate of Authority must be reviewed biennially with a twenty-four hour continuing education requirement.

Ohio's need for greater mental health resources is compounded by the scarcity of medical professionals that can deal with individuals in crisis. Just last Thursday, the Columbus Dispatch reported that Ohio, sadly, has slipped in national ranking in terms of mental health prevalence and access to care. The article cited a report by Mental Health of America, which concluded "there is a shortage of trained mental health workers, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and counselors, with just 1 professional per 1,000 people".

So to circle back to HB 111, not only do these APRNs have the requisite education and training to diagnose and treat mental illnesses, but they're already working in many community-based settings where the patient might lack direct access to the currently-approved designees who can mandate an evaluation. By utilizing the expertise of this subset of APRNs, we can further help our most vulnerable citizens when time is of the essence.

Chairman Burke and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to speak before you today. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.