



**State Representative Richard D. Brown**  
**Ohio's 20<sup>th</sup> House District**

**Sub. House Bill 214**  
**Sponsor Testimony**  
**6/14/19**

Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the Health Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on behalf of Sub. House Bill 214. HB 214 will greatly expand access to audio prescription readers for blind and visually impaired persons by requiring pharmacists to provide such individuals with an audio prescription reader for at least the duration of the prescription, or, to provide the opportunity to purchase the device. An audio prescription reader is simply a device that audibly conveys the information that is already required by law or rule to be contained on a label affixed to a container in which prescription medication is dispensed. This information to be audibly conveyed shall also include any cautions which may be required by federal or state law, including information about drug interactions, contraindications, and side effects.

As is often the case now, Ohioans with vision impairments have to utilize unreliable methods to differentiate which pill bottles contain their prescriptions. These include tying objects to the bottle, which do not always stay attached, or leaving different prescriptions in different places in their homes to tell them apart. In light of our heightened concern about securely storing painkillers and other opiates, this is not an ideal method to determine which pill is which.

Additionally, without a prescription reader, blind and visually impaired individuals do not have reliable access to prescription instructions and information concerning side effects.

This is an especially important issue given that less than 10 percent of those who are considered legally blind can read Braille. Increasing access to these prescription reader devices will greatly benefit those who are blind or have vision impairments.

Audio prescription readers are an important tool that individuals can use to differentiate between prescriptions, and importantly, to have reliable access to prescription instructions. While it is my understanding that many pharmacies already print their labels in such a way so that they comply with a prescription reader, Sub. House Bill 214 will put into place guaranteed access to them for people who are blind or have vision impairments so that they may be able access their medications safely.

The bill provides that retail pharmacies, including pharmacies at hospitals, shall provide notice to blind or visually impaired persons, and mail order pharmacies shall provide notice to all purchasers, that a prescription reader can be made available to the person for at least the duration of the prescription and shall be provided if one is requested. The notice set forth in this bill does not apply when the drug is personally furnished by a licensed health professional, like when a physician provides the drug to a patient in his or her office, and it does *not* apply to “institutional” pharmacies (such as pharmacies within residential care facilities, hospice care programs, ambulatory surgical facilities, etc.), pharmacies in a jail or state correctional institution, or pharmacies operated by a governmental entity.

I have met many times with individuals representing the National Federation of the Blind Ohio, who informed me of the urgent need for legislation of this type. Last year, the Nevada state

assembly unanimously passed similar legislation and it was signed into law by that state's Republican governor.

Ohio should follow Nevada's lead and take an important step forward to improve access to audio prescription readers. I urge the committee to pass HB 214. Thank you once again and I will now take any questions that you may have.