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SB 178 Flu Vaccinations

Chairman Lipps, and Ranking Member Boyd, thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on SB 178.

SB 178 authorizes Doctors of Podiatric Medicine (DPMs) to administer flu shots to their patients.

As we all know the flu virus is a very serious matter. An estimated 200,000 people are hospitalized each year in the United States because of it. Moreover, more than 20,000 people die from it each year. Interestingly, much of this can be avoided with an annual flu shot.

Over the years the General Assembly has attempted to expand the opportunities for Ohioans to receive flu vaccinations. The most recent effort was in 2014 when pharmacists were granted the privilege to administer flu shots to their customers.

SB 178 is intended to continue the General Assembly's effort to increase the points of contact for Ohioans to receive their flu vaccinations by allowing podiatric physicians to administer flu shots to their patients.

Podiatric surgeons and physicians undergo rigorous training and education, including four years of college, four years of medical school and three-year residencies in hospitals, where they often train alongside Doctors of Medicine (MD's) and Doctors of Osteopathy (DO's).

Many podiatric physicians are often asked by their patients if they can get a flu shot while in the doctor's office, already assuming a podiatrist can provide that service. They are often very surprised to learn that because of an omission in current Ohio law, a podiatric physician cannot provide this crucial service to them. These patients are then forced to go to another outlet to receive this simple immunization with the risk that they may not go because of inconvenience.

In summary Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, the influenza virus is very serious, causing hospitalization, loss of work and even death. SB 178 will give Ohioans more opportunities to receive a flu shot and accordingly it will lessen the burden the flu has on individuals and our society as a whole.

SB 178 was passed on the Senate floor by a 33-0 margin. I would respectfully request your favorable consideration of the legislation as well. At this time, I would be glad to entertain any questions that you may have.