

To: Members of the Senate Health, Human Services, & Medicaid Committee

Fr: Monica Hueckel, Senior Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association  
Joe Rosato, Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: November 13, 2019

Re: SB 178

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On behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the state's largest professional organization representing Ohio physicians, medical residents, and medical students, we write today to express support for Senate Bill 178, which would authorize Doctors of Podiatric Medicine (DPMs) in Ohio to administer influenza vaccinations to individuals 7 years of age or older.

The influenza virus is a serious public health concern. A 2018 study<sup>1</sup> conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that on average, about 8% of the U.S. population contracts the flu each flu season. Unfortunately, each year thousands of those people are hospitalized due to flu complications. For far too many individuals (particularly at-risk patients such as the elderly, immune-compromised, infants, or young children), the flu virus and its complications can be fatal.

The influenza vaccine has been shown to significantly reduce the incidence and severity of flu-related illness and is one of our most powerful defenses against the flu. Over the years, there have been several initiatives proposed and passed by the Ohio General Assembly which expanded the opportunities available for Ohioans to receive vaccinations against the flu, including the authorization of Ohio pharmacists to administer flu vaccines to customers in 2014.

Our members believe that for those DPMs who wish to provide this service to their patients in a safe and compliant setting while those patients are in their offices, SB 178 represents a valuable chance for our state to ensure that more Ohioans receive their annual flu vaccinations.

The OSMA appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement regarding SB 178 today. Thank you for your attention to our comments and please feel free to reach out to us should you have any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome I Tokars, Sonja J Olsen, Carrie Reed, Seasonal Incidence of Symptomatic Influenza in the United States, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, Volume 66, Issue 10, 15 May 2018, Pages 1511–1518, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/cix1060>