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Proponent Testimony
Senate Bill 341
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
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Chairman Burke, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, my name is James Guliano and I serve as Vice President of Quality Programs at the Ohio Hospital Association (OHA). I have been a registered nurse for 34 years and served in past roles holding 24/7/365 accountability for safe, timely provision of hospital patient care services.

Established in 1915, OHA is the nation's first state-level hospital association. OHA exists to collaborate with member hospitals and health systems to ensure a healthy Ohio. OHA currently represents 240 hospitals and 14 health systems throughout Ohio. OHA members hospitals in 2020 include: 189 acute care hospitals, 23 long-term acute care facilities, 28 psychiatric, rehabilitation, and specialty surgical hospitals, and 10 children's hospitals. Members include 33 critical access hospitals and 51 teaching hospitals. The association is governed by a 20-member Board of Trustees with representation from small and large hospitals, teaching facilities and health care systems with a committee and task force structure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 341 which would enter Ohio into the enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact, on behalf of the Ohio Hospital Association.

OHA has been in close consultation with the Ohio Organization for Nursing Leadership (OONL), a professional society of OHA, over the past several years and has determined this legislation would positively impact our members' ability to provide timely care to the patients they serve, both in their own communities and beyond. You will also be hearing testimony from the group's leadership further outlining the Compact and their supportive position. Through OONL's thoughtful expertise, and in consultation with OHA's entire membership, we believe passage of SB 341 would advance our mission to ensure a healthy Ohio. Participation in the Compact would positively impact patients, licensed nurses, and hospitals alike.

Patients who are served by Ohio hospitals but reside in another state (such as in the Ohio border states of Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky) would be able to receive nursing services from Ohio licensed nurses for needs such as chronic disease follow-up

monitoring, discharge planning and care navigation, to cite a few. Each of these services contribute to optimal patient outcomes and decreasing unnecessary hospital readmissions, while still enabling care for patients in their own community. Interruptions to timely patient care services due to state boundary restrictions lead to fragmentation of care. Promoting continuity of patient care by established health care providers is one of the many benefits that participation in the Compact would afford patients, who are consumers of nursing care.

Licensed Ohio nurses in good standing would be able to practice in other states without delays while awaiting required application processes. Further, OHA supports the changes made to the Nurse Licensure Compact in 2018 to create the Enhanced Nurse Licensure Compact (eNLC). Of note, the eNLC includes standards for licensure which the original compact license lacked. For example, the NLC did not require applicants to undergo state and federal fingerprint-based criminal background checks, whereas the new eNLC does. As Senator Roegner mentioned in her sponsor testimony, the Compact “preserves the regulatory authority of states to protect public health and safety through the current system of state licensure.” Quality care and patient safety are core priorities for OHA and provide the foundation for all we do.

Ohio hospitals would gain an added ability to provide timely care to the communities they serve through Ohio’s participation in the Compact. OHA represents a diverse membership facing many unique and complex challenges. In surveying our member hospitals, we found broad based support for the Compact which demonstrates its potential positive impact on facilities of all kinds including small, rural, urban and academic medical centers. Ohio hospitals having access to practicing nurses with documented and diverse competencies provides an avenue for ensuring continuation of crucial patient care services in Ohio’s diverse patient care settings, such as clinics and ambulatory centers, not just hospitals.

Ongoing preparedness has long been a priority of Ohio hospitals. The COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the Compact’s necessity. As we address the reality of increased hospital capacity and continued stress on staff and other resources, passage of SB 341 would be a crucial tool in addressing these very difficult situations while providing safe staffing. If Ohio were a member of the eNLC we would be able to supplement our current workforce with other licensed, qualified and competent nurses.

OHA appreciates Senator Roegner’s efforts to bring Ohio in line with its neighboring states in becoming a member of the Compact. We look forward to continuing our work with her to ensure passage of SB 341.

Thank you for your time and consideration of OHA’s support for SB 341. I welcome any questions from the committee.