



OHIO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

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East Central District Chair

Ohio Occupational Therapy Association

Proponent Testimony – Senate Bill 7

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Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 7. My name is Mary Arnold and I am a licensed occupational therapist in the state of Ohio. I am here today on behalf of the nearly 1,500 members of the Ohio Occupational Therapy Association who support Ohio's participation in the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact.

I have been a licensed Occupational Therapist for more than 40 years and have been an academic program director for the past 25 years. Currently, I serve as an Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy and the Director of the Master of Occupational Therapy Program at Muskingum University in New Concord, Ohio. I also serve as the East Central District Chair on the Executive Board of the Ohio Occupational Therapy Association.

Occupational therapy helps people with health issues participate in their daily lives to the fullest. Occupational therapy providers utilize everyday activities, or occupations, to provide habilitative and rehabilitate care to their clients. You can find occupational therapy providers in settings ranging from hospitals and nursing homes to schools and homes. Our patients range in age from newborns to senior citizens. I have had the privilege of educating thousands of occupational therapy students and I know they are very dedicated to their patients and their practice.

As you heard last week, model legislation was approved by the American Occupational Therapy Association, National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, and Council of State Governments to establish the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact in 2020. The members of OOTA are very excited about the prospect of Ohio being one of the first states to join this newly established compact.

Ohio is home to more than 11,000 licensed occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants. Many of these providers will benefit from enactment of Senate Bill 7. Participation in the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact will create opportunities for providers in Ohio to work in other states and would also help address access issues by allowing providers in other compact member states to practice in Ohio as well. Further, participation in the compact will provide some additional support to members of the military and their families who may have to relocate due to deployment or a change of station. Patients will benefit from access to additional occupational therapy providers as well as the safeguards that will be put in place for compact member states.

Since the OT Compact was announced last year, many occupational therapy providers across Ohio have expressed excitement over the prospect of working in multiple states. This is especially relevant given recent growth in telehealth utilization by occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants. It is my understanding that several states are considering OT compact legislation this year and we anticipate the compact being formalized and launched in 2022. This legislation has the full support of OOTA as well as the Ohio Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Athletic Trainers Board.

In closing, I want to thank the committee for their thoughtful consideration of Senate Bill 7 and I want to commend Senator Roegner for championing this issue. It is my hope that Ohio will be the first state to join the Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.