

Proponent Testimony for Senate Bill 3 (Roegner)

Joe Russell, Executive Director

Ohio Council for Home Care & Hospice

May 11, 2021



OHIO COUNCIL
FOR HOME CARE & HOSPICE

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and Members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 3—Nurse Licensure Compact (Roegner). My name is Joe Russell and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Council for Home Care and Hospice (OCHCH).

OCHCH represents over 600 home care, hospice, and palliative care agencies across the State of Ohio. Our members care for a variety of individuals ranging from medically fragile children, those who wish to recover at home from elective surgeries, mental health and addiction services, older Ohioans that wish to age in place, and many more. Home health and hospice nurses are the front line caregivers that provide an array of services to those that wish to receive their care in the comfort of their own home.

COVID-19 has exacerbated the health care workforce shortage by quarantining those who had an exposure to COVID-19, which could be up to two-weeks. Some industries have been able to offer COVID-19 hazard pay, incentive pay, and sign on bonuses for frontline caregivers. Home health agencies have had difficulty recruiting and maintaining a stable workforce and have faced challenges to offer similar/ equal benefits. Medicaid home health reimbursement rates are at the same as they were in 1998. When the government is the payor of health care services, agencies do not have the ability to set prices like most other businesses and industries. This has made it all but impossible to recruit and retain qualified nurses and offer a marketable wage within the current pool of applicants.

Ohio's population continues to age, the need for more community-based nurses has risen precipitously. Agencies are having difficulty retaining and replacing frontline staff. As a result, the need to find qualified nurses has reached an all-time high.

Our members believe that the passage of this bill could alleviate some of the workforce issues and have positive long-term outcomes if nurses from other states were recruited and allowed to practice in Ohio. We understand that there are trepidations over competency concerns with credentialed providers from other states. While that concern is not without merit, we wholeheartedly believe that having access to any licensed nurse is better than no nurse at all.

OCHCH is in support of Ohio joining the nurse licensure compact. The passage of this bill would benefit agencies to hire a capable workforce who are ready to serve vulnerable Ohioans in their home.

We want to thank Senator Roegner on her introduction of this important piece of legislation. We hope that you will join her in supporting this bill. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me at joe@ochch.org.