



**Representative Bill Roemer**

**38<sup>th</sup> House District**

**HB 6 Sponsor Testimony**

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 6. Previously passed unanimously by the House last General Assembly as House Bill 673, this timely piece of emergency legislation represents an important step in ramping up our healthcare workforce, increasing access to services, and removing unnecessary burdens on employers and workers. Given the recent developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, it is absolutely crucial that we act as soon as possible to remove these barriers and provide much-needed regulatory relief for our workforce, especially in healthcare.

This legislation would make a number of changes to relax Ohio's workforce regulations in light of the pandemic:

To encourage expansion in our healthcare workforce, HB 197 of the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly suspended the requirement that a prospective nurse pass the licensure examination, and permitted them to receive a temporary license to practice, provided that they meet all other requirements. House Bill 6 would extend that date further until July 1, 2021 in order to speed up the pipeline between soon-to-be college graduates and the workplace. It is crucial that we pass this legislation as soon as possible, as the current temporary licensure arrangements expire March 1<sup>st</sup>, and nursing graduates in the class of 2021 would be unable to obtain temporary licenses.

In addition, current law allows pharmacists to administer flu shots to individuals seven and older. This legislation codifies the expansion of this practice to include COVID-19 vaccines and allow pharmacists to also test for COVID-19, in harmony with the rules adopted by the State Board of Pharmacy. Pharmacists can help play an important role in increasing access to healthcare, especially in more rural settings. In addition, this bill would reduce barriers to entry in the field of pharmacy more generally, by allowing students 17 years of age in a board-approved career

tech program to register as pharmacy technician trainees. Further, it would allow the Board of Pharmacy to extend the length of a pharmacy technician trainee registration to allow flexibility for applicants to finish their required education during the pandemic.

Due to schools shutting down in early March 2020, many teacher education students were unable to complete their student teaching hours. This legislation would codify guidance issued by The Department of Education to schools indicating that they should be flexible regarding the number of hours or weeks of field experience that a student must complete in order to be eligible for an education license or endorsement. This provision will apply in the 2021-22 school year.

Additionally, this bill will correct a drafting error from House Bill 442 of the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly, which mistakenly required school nurses to have a bachelor's degree in nursing in order to obtain the newly-created school nurses registration. Instead, they should only be required to have a bachelor's degree (not necessarily in nursing), as is consistent with current rules promulgated by the Board of Education.

Thank you once more to Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and the members of the House State and Local Government Committee for the opportunity to testify on this important piece of legislation. I urge you to please give this bill swift consideration, as it is absolutely crucial that we provide this regulatory relief to Ohio workers as soon as possible. Many of the provisions in this bill passed unanimously out of the House of Representatives as House Bill 673 last year, and I am hopeful for your enthusiastic support now as well. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.