



Representative Bill Roemer

38th House District

HB 6 Sponsor Testimony

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 6. Previously House Bill 673 in the 133rd General Assembly, 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. With new variants of COVID-19 spreading, vaccinations affecting workload, and the future remaining uncertain, 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 133rd 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 expired March 1st, and nursing graduates in the class of 2021 will be unable to obtain these temporary licenses if we do not act.

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 would 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. Finally, language was also included to allow podiatrists to administer COVID-19 vaccines as the rollout continues to expand.

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 133rd 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 Chair Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig, and the members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform 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. This bill passed the House with near unanimous support, and many of the provisions in this bill passed unanimously out of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee last General Assembly as House Bill 673. I am hopeful for the Senate's enthusiastic support now as well, and I am happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.