



**House Bill 252 – Proponent Testimony**  
**Ohio Senate Health Committee**  
**Sharon Sandridge, Ph.D. – Allied Hearing, Speech and Balance Services**  
**Cleveland Clinic**  
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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chairman Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Health Committee, thank you for allowing Cleveland Clinic to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 252, which would allow Ohio to enter into the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact. My name is Sharon Sandridge, and I am Section Head of Allied Hearing, Speech and Balance Services at Cleveland Clinic. In addition, I serve as the Vice President of Audiology Practice for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Cleveland Clinic's Head & Neck Institute Section of Allied Hearing, Speech and Balance Services is one of the largest audiology programs in the country today, with over 25 clinical and research audiologists located at Cleveland Clinic's main campus (including our Hearing Implant Program) and at nine family health centers throughout Northeast Ohio (Beachwood, Elyria, Independence, Lorain, Medina, Strongsville, Twinsburg, Westlake and Willoughby Hills).

Each audiologist is part of the hearing healthcare team at Cleveland Clinic, working closely with our physician partners in otolaryngology in the Head & Neck Institute and other professional colleagues in a variety of specialty areas including pediatrics, geriatrics, neurology, psychology, dentistry, speech language pathology, plastic/reconstructive surgery and oncology to treat hearing and balance disorders.

Our audiologists are dedicated to helping people with hearing loss or balance issues improve their quality-of-life while dealing with their disorder. Untreated hearing loss can interfere with relationships involving family members, friends and business associates. In turn, reduced communication function may cause feelings of frustration, isolation and withdrawal and even depression. Untreated balance issues can lead to falls which is a leading cause of deaths in the older population.

Because of our status as a leading program in the country, Cleveland Clinic is supportive of House Bill 252, which would expand access for Ohioans and provide more opportunities for speech-language and hearing professionals in the state by entering Ohio into the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Interstate Compact

This compact creates an expedited pathway to licensure, allowing professionals to practice in multiple states without having to obtain additional state licenses. The compact addresses increased demand for audiology and speech-language pathology services and authorizes in-person and telehealth practice across state lines. States participating in the compact communicate and exchange information, including verification of licensure and disciplinary sanctions; however, compact states retain the ability to regulate practice in their state. Currently, ten states are founding members of the compact.

House Bill 252 can directly benefit the patients I serve as Director of the Tinnitus Management Clinic (TMC), an interdisciplinary clinic providing assessment of, and management to patients who suffer from tinnitus (ringing in the ears or head). Allowing our discipline to practice across



state lines under the Interstate Compact will facilitate patients receiving timely care and much needed hope in their journey with tinnitus, which is often a debilitating situation. It would allow patients from states other than Ohio to seek this care by virtually attending the TMC rather than be burdened with the travel time and expense to attend the TMC in person. The TMC at the Cleveland Clinic has provided care to patients from all over the country for over 15 years and is highly respected by leading tinnitus experts who refer to us. Currently, patients travel to any part of Ohio just to meet our licensure regulations. We need to increase access to patients who suffer from the psychological impact from the tinnitus (this includes sleep deprivation, increased anxiety/stress, and withdrawal from society impacting their quality of life).

Passage of House Bill 252 will make a difference for caregivers and patients alike. Along with the passage of recent interstate compact legislation for other professions, HB 252 will help to advance Ohio's status as a destination for medical care.

Again, Cleveland Clinic supports House Bill 252 and urges the committee to be supportive as well. We thank the sponsors Representative Andrea White and Representative Phil Plummer for introducing this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I can be contacted if you should have any questions.