State Representative Theresa Gavarone
Sponsor Testimony
House Bill 184
Before the House Health Committee
May 17, 2017

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the House Health Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 184 – the Ohio Dental Care Optimization Act of 2017. In certain pockets of the State, some people have difficulty accessing the dental care they need. House Bill 184 is a bill that expands access to dental care in a smart way by allowing for the use of state of the art technology and providing innovative strategies to ensure Ohioans have access to quality dental care. More specifically, HB 184 will improve access to quality dental care by making the following updates to Ohio's Dental Practice Act:

1. Update Ohio's dental laws to allow for the use of tele-dentistry to extend care into underserved areas of Ohio – The bill permits dentists to perform exams and supervise dental hygienists and expanded function dental assistants through the use of technology. Under this proposal, Ohio will be one of the first states to permit dental hygienists and expanded function dental assistants with appropriate training to provide interim therapeutic restorations and administer Silver Diamine Fluoride to patients after the dentist conducts a tele-dentistry exam and diagnoses the need for such restorative materials and procedures. The bill also allows dentists to prescribe non-controlled substances, including antibiotics, via tele-dentistry.

2. Double the capacity of the Dentist Student Loan Repayment Program –
Over the last decade, the Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Program has incentivized dozens of dentists through loan repayment assistance to relocate to designated underserved areas and provide care to thousands of Medicaid patients and other low income Ohioans. This program is entirely funded by a surcharge on Ohio dentists' licensure fees. Participants do not receive any taxpayer funds. House Bill 184 will double this surcharge, greatly augmenting the capacity of the program to incentivize more dentists to relocate to underserved areas and provide care to those most in need.

3. Create Primary Care Dental Student Scholarships within the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program providing scholarships for dental students who agree to practice in designated underserved areas upon graduation – This program further enhances the State's efforts to ensure dentists provide care in designated professional shortage areas to Medicaid eligible and other low-income Ohioans.

4. Enhance the ability of dental auxiliaries to provide preventive dental services in schools and other public health settings – House Bill 184 reduces barriers for dental hygienists, expanded function dental assistants and certified dental assistants to provide prevention services and oral health education in school-based and public health settings and expands the number of duties dental auxiliaries can perform outside the presence of a dentist.

5. Promote licensure portability by having Ohio accept the results of all of the regional clinical dental licensure exams – House Bill 184 enhances Ohio's attractiveness as a state in which qualified dentists want to establish their dental practices.

I would also like to point out that this comprehensive legislation was developed with the input of various interested parties, including representatives from the Ohio Dental Association, The Ohio State University College of Dentistry, Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine, and Nationwide Children's Hospital.

In summary, House Bill 184 provides several innovative strategies to break down unnecessary barriers to improving access to quality dental care in Ohio. It maximizes our current dental workforce, improves deficiencies in our dental delivery system and addresses geographic disparities in dental care experienced in some areas of the State.

Once again, thank you for the chance to testify on behalf of this legislation, and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.