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Sponsor Testimony
House Bill 231
House Health Committee
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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for giving us the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 231. This bill will promote the dispensing of controlled substances in containers that have a locking mechanism and/or tamper-evident features. In addition, the bill creates a point of contact between patients and pharmacists to discuss the potential for abuse and diversion of controlled substances.

Our districts and every district in Ohio have been under siege for far too long by the opioid epidemic and pill abuse. There has been much discussion regarding the role prescription drugs play in the opioid epidemic. Four out of five individuals that use heroin admit their problem began with the abuse of prescription opioids. Although Ohio is facing a serious heroin problem, most people begin their addiction with pills; A majority of these individuals will admit their abuse of prescription medications began using substances not prescribed to them. Pilfering is a common means for people, especially young people, to access prescription medications that are not prescribed to them.

According to a study presented by the Medicine Abuse Project, over a third of teens think it is easy to get prescription medications from home; a much smaller percentage of parents share the same opinion. Moreover, in 2015, the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that nearly 40% of high school seniors feel that narcotics, other than heroin, are fairly easy or very easy to obtain. In the same study, 20% of high school seniors that used narcotics in the past year reported the medications were stolen from a friend or relative. The National Institutes of Health reports that nearly 10% of teenagers, ages twelve to seventeen, and nearly a quarter of young adults, ages eighteen to twenty-five, abuse drugs. Furthermore, the National Survey on Drug use and Health found that in 2015 more than one-million minor teenagers were addicted to a substance. We have heard estimates that everyday nearly 80 Ohio teenagers try these substances for the first time.

Certainly, any reasonable and fiscally sound preventative measure that will help to curb this disturbing trend ought to be implemented. House Bill 231 is designed to decrease pilfering and alert others when medication comes up missing. The bill requires pharmacists to offer locking and/or tamper-evident pill vials or tamper-evident timers that show when bottles were last opened. Patients are not required to use these types of packaging aimed at the reduction of pilfering, but they will be presented the opportunity to opt-in. Moreover, the use of this type of packaging will act as a prevention measure and educational aid during the discussion with the pharmacist and when individuals, patients and others, see packaging with tamper evident or locking features.

Timer tamper-evident products are currently sold in various states throughout the country, and locking pill vials are currently used or will be used to dispense medications in Oregon, Colorado, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Illinois. Federal agencies have either been required to evaluate the use of locking pill vials or will be through recently passed and current legislation. Applicable products range in price, but the least expensive we know of sells for under a dollar.

House Bill 231 is intended to help all Ohioans, by addressing the issue on the front-end of the problem. There is no silver bullet to the drug epidemic, but this bill, if passed, can play a key role in preventing addictions before they start. It is time that something is done to ensure individuals understand what is sitting in their medicine cabinet and have a means to see if someone close to them has or is developing a problem.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Chairman Huffman and members of the House Health Committee, we ask for your support of House Bill 231 and are happy to answer any questions.