

## Opposition testimony, HB 231

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

My name is Heather Ross, and I am the pharmacy manager of the Hometown Pharmacy location in Columbiana. I am writing to respectfully voice opposition to HB 231. While well-intentioned, the bill would place undue financial strain on many pharmacies which are struggling to make ends meet.

Over the past decade, the number of independent pharmacies in the state has plummeted in large part due to unsustainably low reimbursements from pharmacy benefits managers (PBMs). It is not uncommon to be reimbursed well below the acquisition cost of the drug itself, let alone the full cost of dispensing which includes the cost of labor and supplies, such as a vial and lid. Unfortunately, some of the worst offenders of these below-cost reimbursements are state-funded managed care organizations servicing Ohio Medicaid patients. As an interesting aside, it is cause for concern that while the state's spending on prescription drugs has ballooned in recent years, total reimbursement to pharmacies has been declining. Of course, one must then wonder where the increase in drug spending is going, but I digress.

At the heart of my opposition to HB 231 is the unsettling possibility that the State would require a pharmacy to *increase* its cost of dispensing by mandating a more costly vial/lid combination without requiring a subsequent increase in reimbursement to cover that cost. This is especially perturbing given the fact that the majority of state-funded managed care organizations already do not reimburse adequately to cover the cost of a *normal* prescription vial and lid.

Lastly, while I do not like to be viewed as a cynic, I do not believe a locking lid will be an effective deterrent against any theft or misuse. Sadly, the opioid epidemic has shown us to what desperate lengths people will go to feed their addictions. There are pharmacies being robbed at gunpoint. I sincerely doubt that a locked lid will stop such a desperate person from destroying the vial to obtain the drugs inside. Actually, such a lid will just make it easier for a person to identify which vials they may want to take from a medicine cabinet – that lock would serve as a little more than an advertisement that desirable drugs are contained inside. Once again, while I do not like to be viewed as a cynic, I unfortunately believe the above points are firmly grounded in the reality that is the opioid epidemic.

In summation, as a pharmacist on the front lines, I am asking you to consider a “no” vote on HB 231. While well-intentioned, the bill will place an unnecessary financial burden on pharmacies without ultimately stopping determined drug-seekers from their end goal.

Thank you for your time,

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