



House Bill 541
Proponent Testimony
House Health Committee
April 11, 2018

Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Antonio, and distinguished members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer proponent testimony on House Bill 541. This legislation supports allowing certain out-of-state licensed healthcare professionals to provide healthcare services on a voluntary basis during charitable events without obtaining a permanent Ohio license to do so. As a representative of a hospital system in Ohio and member of the Community Host Group (CHG) for the Remote Area Medical Clinic in Ashtabula County, Ohio, I am very cognizant of the socioeconomic issues that those without access to healthcare face when they cannot afford essential medical, dental, or vision treatment due to being uninsured or underinsured. Free medical clinics are the key to filling the gaps of healthcare in Ohio to improve population health where provider distribution and capacity is often inequitable across regions and counties.

Facilitating the free medical clinics requires combining efforts across state lines to fill the gaps in medical professionals that currently exists in the underserved communities across the state. According to the Ohio 2016 State Health Assessment, there is still plenty of achievable work to be done to improve healthcare in the state. Disparities in accessing health care, including a lack of cultural competence among healthcare providers, has made it challenging to bring the care needed to Ashtabula County for the first ever Remote Area Medical Clinic in Ohio. While the rate of uninsured adults has declined over the course of last three years in Ohio to 9%, cost is still an issue for those seeking medical care varying by race and ethnicity from 12% to as high as 30%. Of particular concern in the state should be the Appalachian area, which includes Ashtabula County, where uninsured rates vary from 12.1% to 15.6% over a large populous area. Allowing licensed physicians from neighboring states such as Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Tennessee (that have long been hosting free medical clinics) privileges to support Ohio clinics without having to obtain permanent licensing in Ohio, would help alleviate the pain and suffering that many Ohioans endure daily. Statistics also indicate that the Appalachian area and rural-non Appalachian areas of Ohio have the highest percentage of children with unmet dental and vision needs, in addition to increasing population rates underserved by primary care physicians.

Healthcare proponents have made great strides over the course of the last three years to address the gaps in care that exists in Ohio and we will continue to search for innovative and attainable means to bring equity of healthcare to all populations across the state. One way we can do that is

by making charitable health clinics a reality so we can reach a population that remains unserved, but we cannot do it alone. There are many healthcare workers that want to give back and we need to eliminate the barriers that exist to allow them into Ohio to assist in treating our families in need. This bill would allow licensed professionals in good standing temporary licensure to provide assistance at these medical clinics and will be held to the high standards of Ohio's permanent licensed medical providers.

Chairman Huffman and members of the Committee, thank you for allowing this humble testimony in favor of House Bill 541.

Denise DiDonato