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3rd House District

Sponsor Testimony for HB 726
House Health Committee
December 5, 2018

Thank you Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Health Committee. It is my pleasure to testify before you today for HB 726.

This legislation seeks to modernize laws allowing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN) to practice to the full extent of their education, training and certification. HB 726 will serve to expand access to vital health care services for Ohioans across the state by eliminating the requirement that Certified Nurse Practitioners, Certified Nurse Midwives, and Clinical Nurse Specialists sign a contract or “mandatory collaboration agreement,” with physicians in order to practice in Ohio. With the trend of large hospital systems buying physician practices, it is becoming increasingly difficult for APRNs to find a physician to collaborate with them.

Today, more than 1.4 million Ohioans lack necessary access to vital primary care services. In fact, the federal government has designated 150 - and growing - healthcare provider shortage areas across the state. This means that just 55% of patient need is met.

According to the U.S. News and World Report Best States rankings, Ohio is 36th in healthcare. I would also note anecdotally that every state without a mandatory collaboration agreement is ranked above Ohio in healthcare and eight of the top ten states do not require this contract. APRNs offer a high-quality, accessible, and affordable solution to the state’s healthcare access problem.

Ohio’s current laws governing APRNs are outdated and interfere with an APRN’s ability to provide needed healthcare, especially to vulnerable populations in medically underserved areas. H.B. 726 is not an expansion of APRN scope-of-practice. Let me repeat; this is not a scope-of-practice bill. Instead, it removes unnecessary regulatory restrictions on APRN practice that create barriers to access, cause delay in treatment, and contribute to health care inefficiency.

Over the next ten years, the United States will face a shortage of more than 90,000 physicians. As Ohioans are increasingly accessing primary care and other services, this shortfall will become more and more acute. APRNs are licensed professionals who have post-graduate education

(Masters or Doctorate degree). They are trained to diagnose illness, treat patients, order tests, prescribe medicines, deliver babies, and/or administer anesthesia and do this in both primary and specialty care settings. They are required to pass rigorous national certification board exams to demonstrate their expertise, knowledge, and competency. APRNs are trained and equipped to fill the void of the millions of citizens nationwide being added to healthcare marketplace.

Currently 22 states, plus Washington D.C., have enacted legislation that gives patients direct access to APRN care and eliminates the requirement that APRNs enter into a contract with a physician to deliver care. This proposed legislation will help address, in a safe way, a significant access issue that utilizes highly trained APRNs.

This legislation is one solution that will address the shortage of providers in Ohio in a drastic way.

Thank you and I welcome any questions.