



Representative Bill Roemer

38th House District

HB 673 Sponsor Testimony

Chairman Schuring, Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 673. This timely piece of legislation represents an important step in ramping up our healthcare workforce, increasing access to services, and removing unnecessary burdens on employers and workers. Given the recent developments in the COVID-19 pandemic, it is absolutely crucial that we act as soon as possible to remove these barriers and provide much-needed regulatory relief for our workforce, especially in healthcare.

This legislation would make a number of changes to relax Ohio's workforce regulations in light of the pandemic. I have grouped these items into three categories for the purposes of my testimony today: healthcare, education, and general workforce regulation.

Healthcare

To encourage expansion in our healthcare workforce, HB 197 suspended the requirement that a prospective nurse pass the licensure examination, and permitted them to receive a temporary license to practice, provided that they meet all other requirements. House Bill 673 would extend that date further until July 1, 2021 in order to speed up the pipeline between soon-to-be college graduates and the workplace.

Further, this bill explicitly states that any hours a nurse works under a temporary license will count towards their clinical hours. Clinical hours are required by the Ohio Board of Nursing before qualifying to take the nurses exam. It would be grossly unfair to have nurses actually working during this time but still unable to sit for their exams. It is only fair that the board be required by law to count those hours.

Third, and most importantly in light of recent news, current law allows pharmacists to administer flu shots to individuals seven and older. This legislation seeks to expand that provision to include any future COVID-19 vaccine and allow pharmacists to also test for COVID-19. Pharmacists can help play an important role in increasing access to healthcare, especially in more rural settings. It is my understanding that two COVID-19 vaccines are now seeking FDA approval, and could be ready to administer to the public as soon as December or January.

Education

Due to schools shutting down in early March, many teacher education students were unable to complete their student teaching hours. This legislation would codify guidance issued by The Department of Education to schools indicating that they should be flexible during the 2020-2021 academic year regarding the number of hours or weeks of field experience that a student must complete in order to be eligible for an education license or endorsement. (I will also be providing an amendment that would expand this to the 2021-22 school year.)

Removing Burdensome Regulations

Many individuals and business owners are trying to keep their businesses afloat during these difficult times. The last thing they should be worrying about is keeping up with their professional development hours. In order to provide relief, this bill suspends professional development hour requirements for all occupational licenses, unless they can meet by virtual means. (I will be providing an amendment that will alter the dates in the current version of the bill to July 1st, 2021.) As a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) I am required to complete 120 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) every three years to retain my certification. Most recently, in December 2019 over 90% of my CPE was completed on a virtual basis. This bill would allow for other professions to receive credit for virtual professional education.

Finally, this legislation would eliminate the temporary event salon license. Currently, cosmetologists and barbers who wish to cut hair anywhere other than their fixed location must obtain another permit. House Bill 673 would allow cosmetologists and barbers to provide services at homes or other facilities without having to file burdensome paperwork or paying a fee. This would also increase access to these services for those at home who are at-risk and cannot safely go out.

Thank you once more to Chairman Schuring, Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee for this opportunity to testify on this important piece of legislation. I

urge you to please give this bill swift consideration, as it is absolutely crucial that we provide this regulatory relief to Ohio workers as soon as possible. This bill passed unanimously out of the House of Representatives, and I am hopeful for your enthusiastic support as well. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.