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HB 558 PROPONENT TESTIMONY – DR. RUSSELL CURINGTON

March 8, 2022

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 558. My name is Dr. Russell Curington, and I am an Ohio pharmacist serving as the Director of Pharmacy for St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy in Cincinnati. Our organization has been recognized for its innovations in outcomes-based underserved care locally, statewide, and nationally. Our doctorate-level pharmacists are credentialed well beyond Ohio's licensing requirements, leading a nationally accredited residency program and award-winning pharmacist training program. Along with the other Charitable Pharmacies in Ohio, **our partnership with the Board of Pharmacy is primed to ensure that this collaboration of experts result in the safe collection of prescription medications from end-user donations and are delivered to Ohioans who desperately need them.**

I am here today to speak on behalf of nearly 10,000 of our neighbors in need who received free prescription medications from the Charitable Pharmacy since its opening in 2006. Additionally, I speak on behalf of the thousands of Ohioans who were turned away from our program due to our limitations to procure enough of the life-saving medications they needed. It is our mission to ensure that the underserved in Cincinnati and its surrounding communities in Ohio experience fair and equitable healthcare.

Currently, the unfortunate reality is that Ohioans experience at least two-tiers of healthcare; they are separated by the fact that some can afford their prescription medications and others cannot. Ohio sought to address this issue in 2006 when it created the definition of a "Charitable Pharmacy," which essentially is a community pharmacy that follows all regulatory requirements as other traditional community pharmacies with the one caveat that it can receive and dispense drug samples provided by drug manufacturers through physicians. In our first full year of operations in 2007, our Charitable Pharmacy filled 32% of its prescriptions with drug samples, but every year since, this percentage has decreased. In recent years, drug manufacturers have dramatically reduced the distribution of samples, eliminating them almost entirely. Most doctor's offices do not even stock samples anymore, thus, eliminating donations of brand name medications that are too cost-prohibitive for Ohio's Charitable Pharmacies to procure otherwise. Consequently, in 2021, we were able to fill only 2% of our prescriptions with drug samples. **HB 558 provides a solution to the decreasing donations of expensive brand name medications, highlighting once again Ohio's heart toward the health and equitable care of its residents.**

This bill directly addresses the lack of medication access for Ohio's uninsured and underinsured residents. This bill is for the graduate student on her 26th birthday who can no longer access her asthma inhaler because she is now ineligible for her parent's health insurance. It's for the new Ohio resident who moved to Ohio to care for her elderly parents but temporarily cannot access her own prescription medications until her Ohio Medicaid application is approved. It's for the senior on the day he enters the Medicare gap and is asked to pay over \$1,000 at a retail pharmacy to access insulin and blood thinners that were a fraction of that price the month prior. It's for the citizen re-entering



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society after incarceration with only 30 days of medication in hand and a world of hurdles to overcome. It's for the hardworking Ohioan who received a promotion at work along with the pay increase that causes the fiscal cliff in which he loses his Medicaid benefits but still does not make enough to afford quality health insurance. Further, this bill enables the adult child of a COVID victim the opportunity to find some meaning within their tragic loss by donating the stockpile of their parent's unused medications to save the life of someone else in their community. **Given the 16 years of successes from Ohio's Charitable Pharmacies and the current law that supports end-user donations of cancer treatments, I am confident in our ability to ensure this proposed law expansion provides a safe and effective framework for Ohioans to save the lives of their neighbors by donating resources that would otherwise be destroyed.**

Chair Lipps and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would welcome any questions you might have at this time.

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