



OHIO PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

2674 Federated Blvd., Columbus, OH 43235 • Phone: (614) 389-3236 • Fax: (614) 389-4582

**Testimony of Don Bennett
HB 645
House Health Committee
December 6, 2022**

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Health Committee, I am Don Bennett, and I am the Interim Executive Director of the Ohio Pharmacists Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the OPA's concerns with HB 645.

HB 645 would authorize the operation of remote dispensing pharmacies and would allow these pharmacies to fill prescriptions while being staffed by two or more pharmacy interns or pharmacy technicians. HB 645 would only require the remote pharmacy to be overseen by a pharmacist through the use of a telepharmacy system.

The bill would require the Board of Pharmacy to adopt rules governing the operation of remote dispensing pharmacies within 18 months of the bill's effective date and, if the Board fails to do so, authorize the Ohio Attorney General or a county prosecuting attorney to apply for a court order requiring their adoption.

All pharmacy services, including the ordering, storage, and dispensing of dangerous drugs, onsite professional supervision, and oversight of other pharmacy staff, are under the pharmacist's purview for the safety and well-being of patients and the pharmacy staff. Several technical checks when dispensing can be missed by the absence of physically checking medication products by the pharmacist before dispensing. Additionally, the presence of a pharmacist can ensure that the pharmacy team is well supported should a need arise for dispensing audits, handling a drug diversion, and other human resources issues.

Pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare provider to local patients in their communities. Some of this accessibility comes from the pharmacist's ability to see patients and provide care onsite. Our members anecdotally told us how patients went into the pharmacy, stating they felt ill. The pharmacist could take a blood pressure reading or verify the patient's need for care and call for emergency transportation services to the nearest emergency care facility. The absence of a pharmacist onsite would not allow for this type of care. The bill provides the physical infrastructure of a dispensing site but misses out on the heartbeat of the service, which is the presence of a pharmacist.

The pandemic has shown pharmacists to be essential when providing services like medication therapy management, immunizations, and point-of-care testing like COVID-19. Ohioans across the state have become accustomed to receiving these vital services. These essential services are lost without the presence of a supervising pharmacist. Pharmacy desert issues must be addressed, but a solution like this bill provides a slimmed-down set of services. Our patients across the state deserve all the services that community pharmacies, led by an onsite pharmacist, can provide.

The OPA does not support the passage of HB 645 in its current form. We believe there is not an urgent need to pass this legislation that would override the professional pharmacists' responsibility to safeguard the ordering, storage, and dispensing of dangerous drugs, and the onsite professional supervision and oversight of other pharmacy staff. The OPA is committed to working with all interested parties and stakeholders to identify better and safer ways to address pharmacy deserts including language to ensure that Ohio pharmacies are able to mail prescriptions to their patients.

Chairman Lipps, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 645. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions.