

Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Lampton, Ranking Member Miranda, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding HB 675. I am Elie Harriett, co-owner of Classic Insurance & Financial Services Co., in Mansfield, Ohio. We are in the almost-singular business of offering help, advice, and products in the area of Medicare-related health insurance all throughout the state of Ohio for over 10 years.

HB 675 is important to me, my business, and the general public because it restores access to Ohio seniors for meeting good, competent advisors during a very difficult time in their lives where they are struggling to make a decision that could affect their remaining years.

Very often today, seniors are retiring from work and being removed from their employers' medical plans. In many cases, for the first time since they were teenagers or in their twenties, they are faced with the daunting task of making a health insurance decision for their families. In some cases, the decision they make today could affect the rest of their lives, both in terms of the kind of care they are able to get and the financial impact it can have on their retirement years. Unfortunately, faced with this daunting task of making a health insurance choice, too many people try to do it themselves and respond to the flashiest, most incessant marketing they receive, rather than taking the time to try and form a bond with a person they can trust to guide them to the correct decision. That's what HB 675 does: allow a trusted advisor the opportunity to connect with new people who need help at one of their most vulnerable times.

The prohibitions placed on us by the department of insurance are out of step with other states. Almost every other state in the country allows insurance agents and brokers to initiate outbound solicitation calls for Medicare Supplements. And no state is reporting issues with solicitations for this product being out of hand. Far from being a "senior protection" issue, the current regulation is stopping good people from meeting a population that needs help to navigate the deluge of ads targeting the general population and learn what a person needs specifically for them.

NAIFA queried the DOI to find cause as to why these restrictions are in place. Instead of receiving concrete examples of the necessity of them, we received general statements about the importance of senior protection from solicitations and a false belief that these protections mirror federal law. Federal law does not encompass this product and most states have not seen fit to prohibit soliciting it as Ohio has done.

The current rule bans advisor-initiated communications in any form except direct mail. As costs keep rising on Medicare Supplement insurance, it is important seniors have every opportunity to meet advisors that can help them manage them while keeping the need for insurance front and center of the conversation. These conversations should not be stifled by erroneous belief seniors are being harassed to buy this product and this product alone. For many citizens in rural areas of this state, personal interactions are the key to developing solid relationships. Limiting how we talk with potential clients regarding Medicare Supplement insurance does a disservice to both the advisor and the general population.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.