



Thomas E. Collins, MD, FACEP, FAEMS
Proponent Testimony SB 6
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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of Senate Bill 6. My name is Thomas E. Collins, MD, FACEP, FAEMS and I am President of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland and Northern Ohio (AMCNO).

The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO), founded in 1824, is the region's professional medical association, and the oldest professional association in Ohio. We are a non-profit 501(c)6 representing physicians and medical students from all the contiguous counties in Northern Ohio. The mission of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio is to support physicians in being strong advocates for all patients and promote the practice of the highest quality of medicine.

The AMCNO stands in strong support of SB 6, which would enter Ohio in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. The Interstate Medical Licensure Compact is an agreement among participating U.S. states to work together to significantly streamline the licensing process for physicians who want to practice in multiple states. It offers a voluntary, expedited pathway to licensure for physicians who qualify.

State medical boards recognizing that physicians would increasingly practice in multiple states because of telemedicine began actively discussing the idea of creating an interstate medical compact in 2013 with the goal of trying to help streamline traditional medical-license application processes. Since then, 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam have joined the compact.

The mission of the compact is to increase access to health care – particularly for patients in underserved or rural areas. The compact makes it possible to extend the reach of physicians, improve access to medical specialists, and leverage the use of new medical technologies, such as telemedicine. And as we have seen because of the COVID-19 epidemic, the demand for virtual health care has risen substantially.

While making it easier for physicians to obtain licenses to practice in multiple states, the compact also strengthens public protection by enhancing the ability of states to share investigative and disciplinary information. States that participate in the compact can streamline licensure by using an expedited process to share information with each other that physicians have previously submitted in their State of Principal License (SPL) -- the state in which a physician holds a full and unrestricted medical license.

Before physicians can participate in the compact, they must designate an SPL, complete an application, and then receive a formal Letter of Qualification from that state, verifying that they meet the compact's strict eligibility requirements. Physicians cannot obtain licenses through the compact without completing these steps. We believe these protections will help ensure safe, quality care for all Ohioans.

Again, the AMCNO stands in support of this legislation, and we thank bill sponsors Senator Huffman and Senator Rognier for their leadership on this important issue.