



Ohio Advocates for Medical Freedom

Advocating for Medical Freedom since 2015

Dear Senator Steve Huffman,

I am writing to express our significant concern regarding the slow progress of HB 73, a bill which has garnered considerable support from both patients and physicians across Ohio. Despite overwhelmed backing in the House, the bill's progression has been unexpectedly slow since its assignment to the Health Committee in early September of 2023. Our frustrations were exacerbated when your office canceled the January hearing three days prior to its scheduled date, followed by a five-week delay before the interested party meeting you were requiring was convened. It is important to note that most of the parties at this meeting had already been consulted multiple times on the House side.

Ohio Advocates for Medical Freedom (OAMF) collaborated with Representative Gross's office to incorporate amendments to address most of the concerns raised during the interested party meeting on February 28th and returned these to your office on April 4th. We want to reassure you that this bill does not facilitate increased access to abortion drugs. Representative Gross specifically revised the area of your concern, regarding doctors not being required to provide any test results prior to prescribing. This language was changed to only apply testing for infectious diseases or similar illnesses. Pregnancy is not a disease or illness; therefore the language cannot be applied to pregnancy. This was explained in the email from Representative Gross' office when she sent you the revised version and LSC summary. Despite her efforts to accommodate your wishes, we were recently informed that the introductory hearing will not occur until May 8th. Given our experiences in legislative advocacy, we are concerned that such delays are usually a precursor to a bill being sidelined indefinitely in committee, a pattern we have observed since our organization's inception in 2015.

HB 73 is a vital piece of legislation that ensures the well-being of the people of Ohio and supports medical professionals across the state. Although it is opposed by the Hospital Lobby, the Medical Board, and the Pharmacy Association, many doctors and pharmacists support the bill because it enables them to prescribe or dispense life-saving medications to their patients that they were hindered from doing during the pandemic. The bill simply aims to prevent unnecessary barriers to obtaining crucial medications. The argument that this legislation will lead to a surge of reckless prescribing is unfounded and does not reflect the professional integrity of 99.9% of practicing physicians. Despite this, the continued opposition seems disproportionate and suggests that the delay might not be solely due to concerns about the bill's provisions.

Senator Huffman, as an elected representative, it is your duty to advocate for and protect the rights and liberties of Ohioans. We urge you to expedite the committee review process for HB 73, demonstrating your allegiance to the voters over hospital and pharmaceutical lobbyists, as well as medical associations that do not represent the interests of the public or every health provider. If the intent behind the prolonged scrutiny is to let the clock run out on this legislation, we implore you to bring it forward in a timely manner, allowing the opportunity for a transparent and open vote in your committee. Ohioans have lost faith in their representation after years of watching crucial legislation be hindered and killed. They deserve to know where each Senator stands on this pivotal issue of medical freedom. You are uniquely positioned to call for this vote, and bring them the transparency they want and deserve.

In conclusion, you may have noted, the recent federal spending budget designated over \$1 BILLION to "emerging zoo infectious diseases" and "influenza pandemic measures." We are seeing cases of "bird flu" (a zoonotic infection) in various states across the nation and there is a likely possibility we are headed into another pandemic or significant flu season. Without HB 73 we will be in a similar situation as we were in with Covid, where providers struggle to bring treatment options to their patients and more Ohioans die.



We trust that you will act swiftly to move HB 73 through to a vote before the summer recess, thereby facilitating the possibility of a full Senate vote in time for the bill to be in effect for fall “flu season”. Every day we delay, Ohioans are deprived of potentially life-saving treatments, directly impacting families throughout the state.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Stock OAMF President & the OAMF Team