



To: Members of the Ohio Senate

Fr: Monica Hueckel, VP, Advocacy, Ohio State Medical Association
Janet Shaw, Executive Director, Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association
Kate Mahler, Executive Director, Ohio Academy of Family Physicians

Da: February 23, 2024

Re: SB 60 Certified Mental Health Assistants

On behalf of the above organizations, which represent thousands of physicians across the state of Ohio, we write today urging members of the Senate to oppose Senate Bill 60, which we remain opposed to due to outstanding major concerns which impact patient safety.

Against our opposition, SB 60 is scheduled for a vote on Wednesday in the Senate Higher Ed and Workforce Committee and we have heard there is an effort to vote it out of the Senate later that day.

SB 60 will create and license a new healthcare provider, called a Certified Mental Health Assistant (CMHA) which does not exist in any other state in the country. Our opposition to SB 60 is due to:

- 1.) The bill has no mention of specific educational hours or training a CMHA would need to go through. This is like no other bill we have seen before. When our organizations have been asked to weigh in on scope of practice bills in the past, we have been able to look at specific education and training and assess how that will equip others to provide patient care. Without any specifics around education and training there is absolutely no guarantee patients will be protected.
- 2.) Since a certified mental health assistant (CMHA) does not exist in any other state, there is no national organization or credentialing body for this type of practitioner, like there are for Physicians, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants. We do not believe the current language in the bill would fully prepare a CMHA for the scope of practice that this legislation would authorize, which includes prescriptive authority, nor would it ensure patient safety and that all CMHAs would be educated and trained in the same manner.
- 3.) Vague, confusing language and an overall lack of information and context about key concepts surrounding the CMHA and the CMHA's scope of practice. SB 60 still leaves us with many unanswered questions and concerns, especially since this practitioner would be responsible for something as important and sensitive as delivering mental health care services to people in our communities.

Again, our organizations remain opposed to SB 60, and we believe it is not a suitable or reasonable solution to addressing increased need for mental health care in our state. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns, and please feel free to reach out to Monica Hueckel at 614-657-5177 with any questions.