Opponent Testimony SB 249
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Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Dr. Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 249. My name is Kristin Englund, MD and I am a Past President of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio (AMCNO), and a board-certified Infectious Disease physician from the Cleveland area.

The Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio represents 7,400 physicians and medical students in Northeast Ohio. For more than 200 years, we have championed policies that promote the highest quality practice of medicine for physicians and their patients.

We strongly oppose SB 249. We strongly value our responsibility as physicians to protect the health and safety of our patients and the Ohio public. This includes ensuring that medications are safely prescribed. As physicians, we are concerned about the harm to patients that will occur to patients if this bill is passed, and the precedent that this legislation will set.

This bill sets a dangerous precedent in prescription authority. To properly treat a patient, a physician must consider their symptoms and ensure that the diagnosis is correct, and that other medical problems and symptoms are taken into consideration.

This bill would allow a pharmacist to dispense a medicine according to a "protocol" which would put patients at risk for being inadequately evaluated prior to receiving a medication. This bill does not have a process for review by a physician to ensure that the pharmacist or pharmacy intern is properly following the protocol when dispensing the medication, putting patients at even greater risk. The requirement to notify the primary care physician or advanced practice provider is not enough.

This bill allows a medication protocol to be determined by providers who themselves have prescribing authority within their standard care arrangements with physicians. Based on the bill's current language, it appears that individuals such as certified nurse midwives or nurse practitioners, who presently have prescriptive authority within standard care agreements (SCAs), would be able to create these protocols for any number of pharmacists without any regard to the SCA. While the bill does not hold the individual prescriber liable, what of the physician who maintains the standard care arrangement with a potential prescriber?

Invermectin is indicated for parasitic infections; these are complicated infections that are not easily diagnosed or treated. Patients will not receive the evaluation they deserve before receiving medication. Additionally, there are no provisions for appropriate long term follow up that patients deserve.

This bill effectively eliminates a physician from the pharmaceutical disease management process, which can put our patients at risk. For this reason, and in the interest of patient safety, we respectfully ask you to oppose this legislation.