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Sunset Review Committee  
Ohio Dentist and Physician Loan Repayment Advisory Boards

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Chairman Jordan and members of the Sunset Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the Ohio Dentist and Physician Loan Repayment Advisory Boards. My name is Lance Himes, and I serve as General Counsel at the Ohio Department of Health.

### Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Advisory Board

The purpose of the Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Program is to encourage dentists to practice in underserved areas of Ohio by providing loan repayment on behalf of those dentists who provide dental care in shortage areas. Loan applications are typically approved every other year for two-year contracts with the ability for dentists to renew contracts for a third or fourth year.

The board meets once annually to determine the amount of funding for dentists who are awarded contracts every other year, to be made aware of the eligible candidates, and to be provided an update on the program. The board is required to annually submit a report to the Governor and General Assembly describing the operations of the Dentist Loan Repayment Program during the previous calendar year. In practice, the report is written by ODH and approved by the board. With the enactment of HB 463 (Johnson, 130<sup>th</sup> GA), the board will also fulfil this function for the newly established Dental Hygienists Loan Repayment Program.

At any one time, there are approximately 7 dentists participating in the Ohio Dentist Loan Repayment Program while the advisory board has 10 members. The 10 member board serves two year terms without compensation. Dentist participation in the program will increase with the recently enacted increase in licensure revenue being directed to the program, but the board is still large compared to the small number of participants in the program.

ODH values the work of the board, but feels the same level of input can be received through existing, and more frequent, channels of communication with oral health stakeholders without having a statutorily created board. As such, ODH proposes to sunset the advisory board.

### Ohio Physician Loan Repayment Advisory Board

Similar to the Dentist Program, the purpose of the Ohio Physician Loan Repayment Program is to encourage physicians to practice in underserved areas of Ohio by providing loan repayment on behalf

of those physicians who provide primary care in shortage areas. Approximately 20 applications are submitted each year with between 5 and 12 of the applicants receiving approval.

The board meets annually to be made aware of the eligible candidates for that year and to receive an update on primary care specialties being placed in health resource shortage areas and areas where shortage areas did not receive a physician placement. The board is required to annually submit a report to the Governor and General Assembly describing the operations of the program during the previous calendar year. In practice, the report is written by ODH and approved by the board.

The ratio of the physician advisory board members to physician participants is also small for this program. There are currently 19 physicians participating in the Ohio Physician Loan Repayment Program while the advisory board has 10 members. The 10 member board serves two year terms without compensation.

The work of the board is valuable but the same level of input can be offered to ODH through a less formalized approach. Therefore, ODH proposes to sunset the advisory board.

ODH is committed to maintaining the same level of communication and engagement with oral health and primary care stakeholders on both the loan repayment programs and other healthcare access issues.

Thank you for your consideration, and I am available to answer any questions you may have at this time.