

Candidate Questions

Allison Russo, State Representative District 24

1) Ohioans receive the best health care when physicians serve as the leader in a team approach to medicine. Physicians are trained and licensed to provide comprehensive patient assessment and diagnosis and may order x-rays, chest scans, perform surgeries, and have full prescriptive authority. Physician extenders such as physician assistants, advanced practice registered nurses, physical therapists, and other providers have less education and training than physicians. However, organizations and lobbyists supporting physician extenders often pursue legislation granting access to patients that reach beyond their education and training, endangering patient care.

Would you support legislation that extends the scope of practice rights for physician extenders that would allow them to evaluate, test and treat patients without physician supervision? No

Comments: My approach to scope of practice legislation has always been to work with both proponents and opponents to find compromise that balances patient safety, improved access, and day-to-day practice implications. I see allied health professionals as a critical part of the patient care team, with the physician serving as the team leader. I've consistently been a voice for reasonable changes in this space when it directly corresponds with advances in the clinical education requirements of the profession and includes appropriate physician supervision.

2) HB 177, which would remove the collaboration agreement between APRNs (advanced practice registered nurses) and physicians, is being considered in the House Health Committee. The bill effectively allows independent practice authority for APRNs. Unfortunately, HB 177 jeopardizes optimum care by circumventing the physician-led, team-based approach.

Would you support or oppose HB 177? Support

Comments: HB 177 has undergone considerable changes since it was initially introduced. I have thoughtfully considered the testimony presented to the House Health Committee and worked with both proponents and opponents to add additional guardrails that require defined APRN clinical experience and ensure patient safety. The current draft is a careful balance of those considerations, ensures APRNs can practice as trained, and preserves the importance of physician-APRN collaboration.

3) Medicaid providers care for those most in need of health care services. The state's Medicaid system has endured fluctuating federal funding the last several years. Far too often, budget savings are proposed through cuts to Medicaid provider rates. These huge cuts would restrict access to health care for those who cannot seek treatment elsewhere.

As a legislator, would you support or oppose Medicaid provider rate cuts? Oppose

Comments: As a member of the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee and Co-Chair of the Legislative Children's Caucus, maintaining the integrity of the Medicaid program and reducing the number of uninsured Ohioans, particularly children, is one of my top priorities in the next GA. This is especially important as Ohio continues to face a global COVID-19 pandemic, given Medicaid's critical role in ensuring access to both physical and behavioral health care.

4) **As our state continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic, do you support the following to help slow the spread of the virus?**

- Masks/facial coverings: Yes
- Physical/social distancing: Yes
- Limited indoor gatherings: Yes
- A CDC-approved vaccine: Yes

5) **Generally, do you support vaccines and immunizations as a way of preventing disease? (Examples: Hepatitis B, measles/mumps/rubella, polio, etc.) Yes**

Comments: I strongly support vaccines and immunizations and will oppose any efforts to expand exceptions and opt-outs to current vaccine requirements. My training and work experience in epidemiology and public health policy have informed my stance on this topic.

6) The Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine (OU-HCOM) is the state's largest medical school. OU-HCOM now graduates 1,000 osteopathic physicians every four years. Further, OU-HCOM consistently maintains the highest in-state residency program match rate of the seven medical schools in Ohio. Now more than ever, osteopathic physicians are providing and benefiting health care throughout the state.

To that end, will you protect state funding for OU-HCOM as a means to benefit health access and provide quality health care in Ohio? Yes

Comments: Osteopathic physicians are critically important to meeting the growing health needs of our state, especially in the area of primary care. I am strongly supportive of state funding for OU-HCOM.

7) Do you know a DO? If so, who are they and how are you connected to them?

Kristin Devor, DO - neighbor, friend, supporter