

Candidate Questions

Stephanie Kunze, State Senate District 16

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: Physicians and medical doctors' training is extensive. The amount of time and the investment in becoming a doctor equips physicians to serve as the leader in a team approach.

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? Oppose

Comments: Although many groups seek to expand their scope of practice, I believe we should be extremely careful as legislators when evaluating these proposals. Access to care is critical for our constituents but so is quality of that care. As I stated in Question 1, the extensive training ensures quality of care by physicians that is unmatched by other important members of the patient care team. Physicians must continue to lead as their over 11+ years of schooling, training and residency programs provide this high quality of care.

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: I have voted to expand Medicaid, access to telehealth services and reimbursement and will continue to fight for Medicaid provider rates to remain at levels that adequately reimburse the providers for 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:

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: I am grateful to have been in attendance for the ribbon cutting when OU-HCOM expanded right here in Dublin/Central Ohio. As Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee, I am grateful for the in-state residency program match rate and the value your physicians bring to Ohioans.

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

I have a daughter who graduates this spring who is applying to medical school currently. So I may know a DO very well in the future. I also know Benjamin Thompson, DO, Nationwide Children's Hospital. He is a constituent and personal friend. I've also had the pleasure to serve in both the Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio Senate with my friend and colleague, Senator Terry Johnson who is a DO.