

**Mark Bridenbaugh, CEO of Hopewell Health Centers, Inc.**  
**Testimony on HB 49 - House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services**  
**March 16, 2017**

Good afternoon Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. My name is Mark Bridenbaugh, and I am the CEO of Hopewell Health Centers, Inc. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 49.

Hopewell Health Centers provides comprehensive primary and preventative care, behavioral health and oral health services to residents of Ross, Hocking, Perry, Vinton, Athens and Meigs County. All services are provided regardless of ability to pay and we accept all payers including Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance along with those individuals that continue to remain uninsured. We employ approximately 450 individuals and have a payroll of nearly \$20 million.

In 2016, Hopewell Health Centers provided services to 30,744 individuals in this six county region of southeastern Ohio. Approximately 10% of the entire population of this region receives services from Hopewell Health Centers. In Vinton County, we are the only medical and dental service provider in the entire county. Two of our counties, Vinton and Perry, do not have a hospital located within the county and Meigs County has only a freestanding emergency room. Needless to say, health care options are limited in this rural region of southern Ohio and winding two-lane roads can make travel time and distance a barrier to care.

**Ohio made the right choice to extend Medicaid health insurance coverage to some of our most vulnerable citizens.** I see the impact of our patients being connected to health coverage each and every day. The impressive statistics/demographics that I just shared with you would not be possible without Ohio's Medicaid Expansion. We experienced a 25% growth in patients from 2011-2016, starting at fewer than 25,000 in 2011 and exceeding 30,000 in 2016. During the same time, we also added four new locations: Athens, Logan, Coolville and a school-based site at Trimble Elementary. A second school-based site at Federal Hocking High School will open by the end of this month bringing the total to five new locations. Oral Health services were also added in Meigs County and plans are underway to add dental at our Perry County location in the next six months. Hours of operation have been expanded to include evening hours for those that need after work or after school appointments.

At Hopewell Health Centers we are focused on quality health outcomes at the lowest cost. Our center has been Joint Commission accredited since 1998 and we received recognition from the National Committee on Quality Assurance as a Level 3 patient-centered medical home in 2014. We believe that providing a patient-centered medical home for primary and preventative care drives necessary system change. This change is significantly harder to accomplish when there is a large number of uninsured.

Furthermore, **the extension of the Medicaid program has further allowed our health center to integrate behavioral health into our primary care model.** In 2013, Hopewell Health Centers completed a corporate consolidation with the primary community mental health center

that served Athens, Hocking and Vinton Counties. This was done because cuts to the behavioral health system had put access to behavioral health services for all patients in jeopardy. We believed that we could be stronger by pooling resources and working together while leveraging the resources of the Federally Qualified Health Center. Not only have we stabilized behavioral health services, but we have also expanded it into five primary care sites and are providing integrated primary care and behavioral health. In addition, we have also added primary care to two traditional mental health locations to address the physical health of those individuals living with severe and persistent mental illness in a setting that is most comfortable to them. We have a concept that there is no wrong door and try to provide services to patients when and where they are needed.

Most notably, Hopewell Health Centers is on the front lines treating members of our community that are struggling with opioid abuse. Our region has been one of the hardest hit by this problem. When the Ross County Health Department's levy failed in November 2016 and they closed their Vivitrol/opiate treatment program on short notice, we were able to quickly step in and accept the ongoing treatment of approximately 75 individuals. This doubled the number of individuals being treated overnight for us and the number continues to grow. Our Vivitrol/Medication Assisted Treatment program is also fully operational in Hocking, Perry, Vinton, Athens and Meigs Counties with nearly 300 people in active treatment.

With Medicaid expansion, we have been able to reduce our number of uninsured patients from approximately 20% to 10%, moving half of the formerly uninsured to coverage. This equates to roughly 3,000 individuals. The examples of growth and expansion at our health center health center I described above would not have been possible without expansion of the Medicaid program. We have estimated that we will lose over \$2 million in revenue annually in Medicaid if expansion is rolled back. Obviously, a cut of this magnitude will require that we contemplate layoffs of staff, closure of sites and reduction in services. Everything we do will have to be analyzed, nothing will be safe and cuts will be painful for patients and employees alike.

**Sustainability of our patient-centered model of care relies on a vibrant workforce.** That is why the FQHC Primary Care Workforce Initiative was created (commonly referred to as PCWI). PCWI, housed at the Ohio Department of Health, helps to alleviate the challenge of recruiting and retaining quality providers and expose students to advanced primary care in Community Health Center practices. If we connect Ohioans to coverage without increasing primary care capacity – hence reliance on the Emergency Departments and/or other costly settings for non-emergency care – we have done nothing to improve patient outcomes or bend the cost curve.

As introduced, funding for PCWI will be cut by 10%. At my health center, we were able to precept 74 students in the 2015-2016 year, which includes 39 medical students, 5 advanced practice nursing students and 30 behavioral health interns. We provided nearly 8,000 teaching hours during this same time frame. We have a close working relationship with Ohio University school of Counseling and Social Work and also the College of Medicine. In a rural area, it is often difficult to recruit licensed, professional staff and vacancies can remain open for some time. Our best option has been to “grow our own” and provide experiences to students with the hopes of being able to recruit and retain some number of them. Any cut to this program will hinder the momentum we've gained.

We respectfully ask that our PCWI line item be restored and the added mandate allocating funds away from PCWI be struck so that we can continue to teach, inspire and put to work the next generation of primary care and behavioral health providers.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on HB 49 and its impact on Hopewell Health Centers and the patients and community we serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Bridenbaugh, CEO  
Hopewell Health Centers, Inc.