



HAMILTON COUNTY  
**Mental Health &  
Recovery Services Board**

Testimony on Ohio House Bill 49

Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board  
Linda Gallagher Vice President of Mental Health and Addiction Services  
June 6, 2017

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Chair Oelslager, Ranking Member Manning and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on H.B. 49 and our community's urgent need for support.

As you are aware, Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board provides leadership in public behavioral health as the authority charged under ORC 340 with planning, funding, managing and evaluating behavioral healthcare care in Hamilton County. Through contracts with thirty-four local non-profit agencies, we serve over 26,000 mental health and addiction clients on an annual basis. We are committed to providing a continuum of mental health, addiction and prevention services that have a positive impact on the community, are accessible, results oriented and responsive to individual and family needs.

One of the most pressing challenges facing our community is the dramatic increase in heroin and opiate addiction and the associated increase in the number of overdoses and deaths. This epidemic presents challenges for the entire Hamilton County behavioral health system. The number of individuals entering treatment as the result of their addiction to opiates has increased 500% over the past ten years, exceeding the number of individuals receiving treatment for any other addicting substance, including alcohol.

HCMHRSB is active with the Hamilton County Heroin Coalition and supports the initiatives previously described by Commissioner Denise Driehaus. Our Board works with community stakeholders in child services, criminal justice, schools and local businesses. The need in our community for resources to fund prevention and treatment far outweigh the current resources at hand. Over the past ten years, alcohol and drug treatment and prevention providers have had flat funding from state and local funders. And now, in a time of a public health emergency, they continue to do more with less. Despite that, great hope exists for those

who enter treatment. During 2016, HCMHRSB data indicates that two of every three opioid users in treatment reported an increased ability to abstain from continued use through their involvement in treatment. That same data indicates a strong relationship between abstinence and significant improvements in both physical and mental health. We know, when using evidence based treatment models that treatment works and people can recover.

The stories of these men and women who have successfully achieved sobriety are amazing. Mothers who are reunited with their children, men and women who are working and living in stable housing for the first time in years, all demonstrate that the efforts in our community are effective.

There are many unknowns facing our funding models this year and the next. Our community appreciates your work and commitment in helping us address this crisis. Thank you again for your time and attention.