

Thank you to all of you for your efforts and for holding these hearings, and for allowing me the honor and privilege to testify here today.

I would like to share two stories with you.

The first is "Person A"

Person A is the kind of person everyone admires and likes and wants to be around. Person A is always cheerful, and always has kind and encouraging words for everyone, especially when they most need it. Person A helps people, serves as a volunteer in the community, feeds the needy, volunteers at churches, quietly helps individuals in need, tutors at risk kids, and serves on many committees and civic and community organizations and events.

Person B is often panhandling on street corners, lying and conning and manipulating others, stealing, stealing from family and from strangers, stealing from stores, committing crimes every day, gradually growing more severe.

Please consider these two people as I tell you my story.

By way of introduction, I am an addict in long term recovery. I know first hand the feelings of **Hopelessness**.

I also have the great privilege denied to many, that I have gotten to know **hope!** I had the extreme good fortune to

have been arrested in a jurisdiction **not in this state**, and the judge ordered me into treatment. I know the value of treatment. I know that mandated treatment works. I know that we need significant incentives to encourage successful performance.

In addition to my personal experience, I am trying to give back. I have gone to school to become a counselor. In school I have learned to do research, and I can back up what I say.

I have already stated I am an addict in long term recovery. By admitting I am an addict, I also admit all the related behaviors. I know the feeling of needing to lie, cheat, and steal, even when one doesn't want to do so. I know the self-hatred and self-loathing that comes from doing things one swore one never would do, and believed one never could do. I was a career criminal. Today I have a second career. Not long ago, I failed the GED test on my first attempt. Since then, I have gotten the help I needed to succeed in all aspects of my life. I earned an associate degree, then a Bachelor's degree, then a Master of Social Work, with a Graduate Certificate in Addiction Counseling, and a Master of Education in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and am now pursuing a Doctoral Degree. I am a Licensed Social Worker and a Licensed Professional Counselor. In addition to a job I love, helping people

every day, every week I help feed the needy. I am a regular volunteer at a state prison. I serve on Boards and committees for many civic, community, and non-profit organizations. I help people. I have received many honors and awards for community service.

First ever Cleveland State University Award for Outstanding Community Engagement

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Outstanding Peer supporter of the year

National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Ohio Chapter Emerging Leader of the year;

And a commendation from this House of Representatives!

I am NOT unusual or special. I am just an addict in long term recovery. This is simply what we do. Many do not receive the recognition, but we all serve, each in our own ways.

We are addicts. We are many. Do you want us to be person A or person B? Both are the same person. Both are me. I was one, and now I am gradually becoming more like the other. Do you want us to be Person A or Person B?

The only difference is whether you help us. This bill is a start. Please support it. Thank you.

As a possible friendly amendment, I hope you will consider adding wording asking the court in each case to determine which local ADAMHS Board shall be responsible for treatment pursuant to this case, as many people are currently being denied access to care because they lack adequate proof of residency. My understanding is that the court can determine which board has jurisdiction. Please include wording asking that each court shall do so in each case.