



**Representative Richard Brown**  
**Sponsor Testimony House Bill 10**

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Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and Members of the Finance Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on House Bill 10 today. I also want to thank Speaker Householder and Leader Sykes for making this legislation a priority bill in the Ohio House.

I am certain that many, if not most of us in this room, have in some way been adversely affected by our state's drug addiction crisis. Many, maybe most, in this room have a family member, a friend, or a constituent who has fallen victim to this epidemic.

Ohio is in the midst of the nation's opioid overdose epidemic. As recently as 2017, an historic number of Ohioans --- more than 5,200, died over a one year period, or about 14 per day, from unintentional drug overdoses, a 39% increase from the prior year. In Franklin County, overdose deaths spiked 47% from mid-2016 to mid-2017. Although in the latter part of 2018 there was a slight decrease statewide in the number of overdose deaths in Ohio, the number of deaths is still much too high. The Franklin County coroner recently reported that just a couple of weeks ago 9 people in Franklin County died from drug overdoses over a 36 hour period of time from a Tuesday evening through a Thursday morning, from a suspected bad batch of fentanyl.

In order to assist and strengthen existing efforts in our state, such as the Governor's Recovery Ohio Initiative, and agencies such as the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, House Bill 10 will create, within the Governor's Office, the Office of Drug Policy, headed by a cabinet-level Director acting as, in effect, as a Drug Czar, to coordinate and oversee efforts statewide to defeat this drug and addiction crisis. On June 4, House Bill 10 passed unanimously out of the House Health Committee, with no opposition.

House Bill 10 contains an eleven million-dollar appropriation over two years, or, two five and a half million-dollar appropriations to fund the Governor's Office of Drug Policy. This appropriation will allow for the establishment and the maintenance of the Office of Drug Policy's chief provisions including:

- 1). Hiring a qualified executive director and a staff to assess the resources available to Ohioans county by county and to establish a public database of resources by locality.

- 2). Establishing a telephone hotline to assist Ohioans who do not know where to turn for help and local communities in need of assistance.
- 3). Creating comprehensive, statewide policies and establishing best practices regarding education, prevention, medical research, and treatment.
- 4). Cutting through any current bureaucratic red tape that may block Ohioans from getting the treatment that they need. And,
- 5). Conducting a public outreach and awareness campaign through new and traditional advertising means.

Specifically, the request for a five and a half million-dollar appropriation per year is based upon the last operating budget's line item for the Office the Ohio of Consumers' Counsel, which has a similar mission and operational capacity. It too has a research component, a hotline, and it previously ran a public outreach campaign.

We are confident that the Governor's Office of Drug Policy, aided by existing efforts, would have the capital needed to accomplish its mission should it be given levels of funding similar to the OCC.

Once again, thank you Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chair Scherer, and Ranking Member Cera for giving me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 10. I will answer any questions you may have.