



207D Colegate Dr.  
Marietta, Ohio 45750

Douglas Pfeifer MA, LPCC-S  
Chief Executive Officer  
Life & Purpose Behavioral Health

Janice McFarland MA, LPCC  
Director of Clinical Services  
Life & Purpose Behavioral Health

House Bill 200  
House Health Committee  
Testimony Concerning HB 200

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the Health Committee.

Life & Purpose Behavioral Health is a community behavioral health organization located in Southeastern Ohio providing an array of services to residents of Washington County. Our organization provides both mental health and addiction treatment services serving all ages. Our agency believes that HB 200 will have a negative impact on low-income families of Southeastern Ohio especially those that struggle with addiction or mental health disorders.

Although the goal of building self-sustainability within low income adults on SNAP is one that we support, creating stipulations that will automatically disqualify them from those benefits will lead to unintended consequences that will create more problems and not less. A significant barrier to successful mental health and addiction treatment is when the client's basic needs are not being met such as food and shelter. When clients lose their basic needs, their ability to recover becomes significantly more difficult. Subsequently more negative social impact will occur such as homelessness, increase substance use and criminal activity. Our best chance at

building independence and sustainability with those on benefits such as SNAP is to increase supports instead of creating unreachable expectations and ultimately withdrawing supports. One of the treatment services we provide for those suffering from addiction is Intensive Outpatient Treatment (IOP) which requires participants to participate in 9-16 hours of group treatment. This is a high intense service that is designed to effectively help someone struggling with addiction break free into recovery. Those that qualify with this intense level of service are not yet ready to enter the workforce as the addiction still has a stronghold on their life. Forcing those into employment when they are not prepared or ready only leads to additional problems and turn them towards their addiction rather than away from it.

From a behavioral health perspective, the many clients we service qualify for SNAP benefits as it currently stands and this new bill would greatly impact their ability to maintain these benefits. Those that qualify for these benefits are people that struggle with issues that impact their ability to be independent and self-sustaining. Implementing a bill that punishes those that do not meet those stipulations doesn't provide them with the skills needed to meet those stipulations but only services to increase a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. People in a state of despair that lacks skills to obtain employment or pay child support will only encounter more barriers to success. Our goal in treatment is to support our clients where they are at which increases our chances of success. Encouraging them to face something they are not ready for only impairs treatment success. In all of our treatment programming, we look to increase their chances of independence which is done through increase supports, skill building and effective mental health and addictions treatment.

Solutions that threaten our basic needs is not a solution that will work. We strongly encourage that this bill not be supported. We hope that our state works towards a more engaging and cooperative solution so people can find a sense of hope and build self-efficacy to meet the expectations set forth in this bill.