



**Testimony of Beth A. Zietlow-DeJesus
Director of External Affairs, ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County**

**Ohio House of Representatives Health Committee
January 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Chairman Lipps, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Minority Member Boyd, and esteemed members of the House Health Committee. A special thank you to Senator Nickie Antonio for proposing this legislation and inviting the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County to provide proponent testimony of SB 59.

My name is Beth Zietlow-DeJesus. I am the director of external affairs at the ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County, the co-chair of the Cuyahoga County Opiate Task Force, a member of the US District Attorney's Opioid Task Force and a member of the statewide opioid and other drugs committee. I am writing on behalf of our Chief Executive Officer Scott S. Osiecki, the ADAMHS Board of Directors and the staff of the ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County.

As the local authority responsible for the planning, funding and monitoring of public mental health and addiction treatment and recovery support services, the ADAMHS Board has seen the direct impact that naloxone distribution has made in Cuyahoga County. As of December 13, 2019, the Cuyahoga County medical examiner has determined that 524 fatal overdoses have been related to opioids either standing alone or mixed with other substances like cocaine. That number is astonishingly high, but imagine how high it would be if thousands of more lives hadn't been saved by the distribution of life-saving naloxone.

In Cuyahoga County, the medical examiner estimates that since 2015 more than 19,000 doses of naloxone have been administered by EMS; and, since 2013, approximately 15,000 doses have been distributed by Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone). Reporting use of Project DAWN kits is not mandatory, but based on voluntarily reported data over 2,400 lives have been saved from overdose. We know that this number is grossly underreported. Law enforcement officers in Cuyahoga County report having saved nearly 800 people with naloxone since 2014. These are powerful numbers and yet this is only a fraction of lives saved through reportable data. Education has been given to prescribers, healthcare workers, mental health providers and law enforcement and other first

responders. Now it is time to continue this vital education with pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy interns.

It has been recommended by the surgeon general and treatment providers that all members of the community be encouraged to carry naloxone, especially individuals who have family members or friends at risk of overdosing. To make this possible it has already been determined that the public does not need a prescription to receive naloxone. SB 59 follows the next logical step of ensuring that all licensed pharmacists are aware of this fact and are properly trained to dispense naloxone, even without a prescription. We invite all community members to stand with us in saving lives so that people have a chance to live and find recovery.

The easier it is to access naloxone, the more lives can be saved. People who do not live never get a chance to recover. Pharmacies can be found in nearly every city, rural or urban. They are easier to access than many other providers and it is essential that pharmacists understand that they have the ability to dispense this lifesaving medication without a prescription. The public should know that when they walk into a pharmacy to get assistance, they will find a helping hand and not stigma or judgement. It is for this reason we are proponents of SB 59.