

Jack Sherman

NAMI Ohio Parent Testimony
HHS Subcommittee of House Finance
April 9th, 2019

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Thank you for your kind and warm reception.

I stand before you today extremely grateful for the opportunity to have your ear for a few moments.

This is a humbling experience and an experience I take very seriously.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Terry Russell, Executive Director of NAMI Ohio, for the confidence he has in me to stand before you now.

My name is Jack Sherman. I live in Chardon, Ohio. I am the President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio.

More importantly. I am the father of a 35 year old son who, by no fault of his own, has developed a severe mental illness.

I do not want to, nor would I be physically or emotionally capable of reliving the past 16 years because it has been a nightmare that no family should endure.

When my son was a mental health crisis and needed treatment, our only option was to call the police.

This act, in and of itself, is heartbreaking. To call the police on your own child - who is extremely polite, non-violent, well-groomed, well-mannered and highly educated, and yet, does not realize that he is in a psychosis – is devastating.

To watch the police, with their side-arms “at the ready”, a police dog at their side, handcuff your child and haul him away leaves a mental imprint that forever haunts a parent.

All the while, your child has look of total disbelief on his face, wondering “Dad, what did I do?”

Then, to arrive at the hospital, find your child bloody, bruised and chained to a bed....still with a look of, “Dad, what did I do”?

It is heartbreaking....the pain and anguish is indescribable. And at this point in Ohio, this is all part of “doing the right thing” for your loved one with a mental illness when they are in a mental health crisis.

This is because we don’t have many alternatives to calling the police and hopefully having our child with mental illness end up in the emergency room instead of jail.

Afterall, he jail isn’t the right place for him. He needed treatment.

Finally, after a lot of waiting, he was admitted to a psych unit at the local hospital and they kept him there for a few days, to level him out on medication. After giving him a lot of sedatives, then they informed us that they could not keep him there and must release him.

There was no place to house him, so we scrambled around and ended up placing him, a 32 year old young man, in a nursing home!

So, the new cycle has begun...a nursing home is not equipped to effectively treat an individual in a mental health crisis. So we kept looking for a better placement.

This is when the stonewalling begins...lack of space in a qualified treatment facilities, "we'll let you know when something opens up" ... "its best if he stays here until we get him into a qualified treatment program". Three months later you are sneaking your son out the back door to take him home because the nursing home won't release him.

Now, I'm not here today to just repeat the horrors of my son's fight. Thankfully, the Good Lord has enabled him to recover and function. Four days a week, he works as a barber in our community.

Thankfully, he is on a monthly injectable medication so we don't have to live the every day fight that so many families live trying to make certain his daily medication regimen is followed.

And you know what?

All our son wants is the ability to live the life of his friends. He wants to have a keep a job, have a home of his own, a date on Saturday night.... Simply, participating in the activities most of us take for granted. And yet, because of his illness, this becomes a very difficult endeavor.

He is a wonderful, hardworking, sincere individual that simply needs a little help.

Today, my mission is to help other fathers and mothers and most importantly, those folks with these terrible illnesses, to get the treatment that they need so their families are not held hostage to these cruel brain diseases.

The Governor has proposed funding investments for crisis continuum services and other vital mental health related initiatives. I have attached a guide of the most important mental health related investments currently in the budget that must be protected.

This is the first time I have ever been asked to testify here at the capitol. In all honesty, it is a frightening task for the "Joe Citizens" that I represent today.

However, it is an honor if my voice is heard and I have a positive impact on the lives of the 500K Ohioans that deal with this horribly mean and unforgiving illness.

In conclusion, I am asking you on behalf of families and people with mental illness - Please approve the mental health investments in Governor DeWine's budget.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify, I'd be happy to take any questions that you have at this time.



Please Protect These Investments in Governor DeWine's Budget

Crisis Continuum of Care

- **\$37M** total over the biennium to expand Crisis Response and downstream stabilization services for mental illness
 - **\$15M** over biennium (\$7.5M/year) continued from last biennium for SUD Withdraw Management Centers and Collaborative (SUD/MH) Crisis Centersⁱ
 - **\$10 M** over biennium (\$6M/year) for Infrastructure of Crisis Servicesⁱⁱ
 - **\$12 M** over biennium (loaded in first year) for Crisis Stabilization and Preventionⁱⁱⁱ
- **\$5 million** to create at least 30 more Specialized Courts (mental health, drug, veteran's courts, etc.) during the biennium.^{iv}

Statewide Treatment and Prevention^v

- **\$18M** in FY 2020 to support K-12 prevention education initiatives, and to purchase prevention curricula and provide quality prevention services;
- **\$13M** in FY 2020 and up to \$5.0 million in FY 2021 to support and expand statewide multi-media prevention, treatment, and stigma reduction campaigns;
- **\$5M** in FY 2020 to expand the number of individuals trained in mental health first aid and to expand the number of law enforcement trained in approved de-escalation techniques and approaches specific to people experiencing mental health crisis.

Children's Mental Health

- **\$25M** in funding to pay for Room & Board for children to end custody relinquishment.^{vi}
- **\$550M** over the biennium for schools to support student wellness and success in schools. Schools will receive additional funding for mental health counseling, wraparound supports, mentoring, after school programs, and more.^{vii}

ⁱ The funding continues the previous \$15M investment in Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Withdraw Management Centers and Mental Health Crisis centers appropriated in the last state budget. The \$15M is split between line items 336-600 (\$12M over the biennium for SUD Withdraw Management Centers), and 336-421 (\$3M over the biennium for Mental Health Crisis Centers).

ⁱⁱ Line Item 336-643

ⁱⁱⁱ Line Item 336-643

^{iv} Line Item 336425

^v Line Item 336623

^{vi} There appears to be some confusion about where this investment is located in the Executive Budget.

^{vii} This funding is the Department of Education Budget