

To: Members of the Ohio Senate Insurance & Financial Institutions Committee

Fr: Monica Hueckel, Senior Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association
Joe Rosato, Director of Government Relations, Ohio State Medical Association

Da: February 12, 2020

Re: SB 254

On behalf of the Ohio State Medical Association (OSMA), the state's oldest and largest professional organization representing Ohio physicians, medical residents, and medical students, we are writing today in support of Senate Bill 254.

This legislation would require insurers to cover treatment for mental health conditions and substance use disorder no more restrictively than treatments for physical illnesses and ailments of the body. It brings Ohio in alignment with the Federal Parity Law (also known as the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008) and enacts certain reporting requirements in order to maintain the transparency and accountability needed for proper parity enforcement. Additionally, the bill would prohibit insurers from imposing prior authorization requirements for medications prescribed to treat substance use disorders and imposing step therapy requirements before authorizing these prescriptions. Insurers would be required to put these prescriptions on the lowest tier of their drug formularies.

The OSMA echoes the statements of our colleagues in the Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association and the Ohio Society of Addiction Medicine. SB 254 brings Ohioans much-needed parity in their health coverage and is another impactful proposal in Ohio's efforts to address the ongoing drug abuse and overdose crisis. Ohio must do better to help those who need it access affordable and timely treatment for substance use disorders, as well as obtain necessary mental health treatment, which far too many patients are unable to access. The enactment of SB 254 would codify key recommendations for improving mental health treatment and recovery support for substance use disorder in our state as presented in a report by the Recovery Ohio Council.

Our association encourages the committee to support the passage of SB 254 as a strong tool to help make Ohio healthier and to move forward in our efforts to support the recovery of individuals with substance use disorder. The Ohio Legislature and state officials have made great strides in their efforts to prevent drug abuse. SB 254 is a natural next step in this process.

The OSMA appreciates the opportunity to be a meaningful contributor to the legislative process. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.