

Testimony of Scott Sylak
Corrections Subcommittee of Senate Finance
May 21, 2015

Good Morning Chairman Uecker, Vice Chair Brown and members of the Corrections Subcommittee of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is Scott Sylak, and I am the Executive Director of the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County. I am here to testify regarding H.B. 64 on behalf of the 26,000 Lucas County residents who receive services within our system of care, as well as for the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities.

Let me start out by saying thank you for your previous efforts related to improving access to necessary and lifesaving mental health and addiction services. Utilizing the "Recovery is Beautiful" blueprint, Boards are developing recovery-oriented systems of care that focus on the individual's and families' need for recovery services, build on their strengths, and incorporate a coordinated and collaborative approach across the community.

Over the last several years, Lucas County has benefited from increased local and state investments and is experiencing what might be considered a renaissance of sorts. Fueled equally by changing environmental factors at the state and federal level, an 18 member Board of Trustees who share the values espoused by the Recovery is Beautiful Blueprint, a collective of stakeholders who value collaboration and are committed to breaking down barriers, and the availability of funds, Lucas County's behavioral health system is evolving. The increase in local levy and state Hot Spot funding received in FY 13, coupled with the additional 507 funds and modest Medicaid Expansion savings realized in FY 14 made possible a foundation of investments that will carry through to FY 16 despite receiving nearly \$1.8 million fewer 507 dollars from the state in FY 15. It was understood that savings due to Medicaid expansion "ramp up" would be used to

sustain these efforts, rendering additional programs funded by Medicaid savings unlikely. As you are aware, we cannot spend that savings twice.

Our efforts are consistent with the State's priorities; including efforts to reduce hospitalization and crisis, increasing housing opportunities for the mentally ill and addicted, increased access to medication assisted therapies and the development of strategies that reduce the number of mentally ill and addicted involved in our criminal justice system. And while we are proud of all our advancements, I would like to highlight some of our activities related to the criminal justice system. These include;

- Ensuring that case management, linkage services and psychotropic medications are available to inmates upon release from state prison and local jails.
- Expanded Family Drug Court capacity by 100%.
- Provided funds to the Urban Minority Alcohol and Drug Abuse Project and the Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities Program to provide case management and group services after they received cuts in their SAPT funding.
- Recently established a Vivitrol Program in collaboration with A Renewed Mind and the Lucas County Corrections Center where the first Vivitrol shot is provided while the inmate is still in jail.
- Collaborating with Zepf Center, the Ohio Attorney General's Office, and the Lucas County Commissioners to develop 70 Recovery Housing beds dedicated to victims of Opiate and Heroin overdoses who are referred through the Sheriff's Addiction Resource Unit, the Prosecutor's Office or the local court systems.
- Doubled access to Crisis Intervention Team Training to Law Enforcement Officers to improve officer and consumer safety while improving opportunities for diversion.
- Collaborated with over 50 area professionals to initiate the Sequential Intercept Mapping process in Lucas County which has helped guide our local criminal justice reforms and promoted the value of systems collaboration.

You have read the articles and you have heard the numbers. Ohio's criminal justice system is being overwhelmed at the state and local level by individuals in need of addiction and mental health services and supports. The SFY 2016-2017 budget before you includes an increased focus on behavioral health services for the criminal justice involved population by both the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. While we support these initiatives and the ongoing focus on providing services and supports to individuals with addiction in the state prison system, I have a few recommendations for your consideration:

- Ensure that inmates within Ohio's state prison system have access to critical mental health services by restoring the \$6.2 million to the DRC medical and mental health services line item that was reduced in the House passed budget. Quality mental and physical health care must be equally accessible to offenders while incarcerated as well as upon release.
- Ensure that all treatment funds distributed to communities to support diversion and reentry efforts flow through local ADAMH Boards. In order for these funds to be leveraged most effectively, they must be integrated with existing local plans and initiatives.
- Require that any new community addiction and mental health treatment programs are conducted through OhioMHAS certified providers.
- Ensure that Ohio's communities have adequate and stable funding to meet the ongoing service and support needs of justice involved individuals. These programs are funded in part by the OhioMHAS 507 and 421 funds. I ask that you preserve these resources in FY 16 and FY 17.

Senators, the local criminal justice initiatives I outlined earlier in my testimony are making a difference in my community. We stand ready and willing to work with ODRC,

OhioMHAS, and others to continue our work to implement programs and services that are helping our citizens.

Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. I will now be happy to answer any questions.