



To: The Senate Medicaid Committee
From: April J. Caraway, Executive Director
Re: Budget Testimony
Date: May 12, 2015

Senator Burke, Senator Cafaro, and members of the committee, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to you today. My name is April Caraway. I have worked for the Trumbull County Mental Health and Recovery Board since 2004 and have served as its Executive Director for six years. The expansion of Medicaid two years ago has enabled us to get health care coverage for over 9,000 additional people in our County. However, there are still many people with mental health and addiction issues who do not qualify for Medicaid. Since July 1, 2014, we have spent over \$1 million so that over 1,500 Trumbull County residents could receive services that would be Medicaid eligible, like counseling, case management, detox and medication, if they qualified.

We also use state and levy funds, and write for many grants, to pay for basic needs for thousands of clients. These include housing, transportation, food, clothing, furniture, household items, and many others. In addition, recovery supports like job training and employment services are also provided. None of the services I just mentioned are reimbursable through Medicaid.

Another huge need is for detoxification of persons who have an opiate addiction. Detox is NOT a Medicaid covered service for any stand-alone organization with over 15 beds that provide this life saving service. So far this fiscal year, we have spent \$79,500 in levy and state dollars detoxing people who are either on Medicaid or are indigent. Trumbull County is sixth in the state for accidental overdoses from heroin and other opiates. Just since January of this year we have had 34 deaths attributed to heroin and other drugs. At this rate we will lose 100 people to this disease this year, nearly double any other year in recent history. I'm extremely frustrated and concerned that in the midst of this heroin epidemic, Trumbull County is going to lose more than another half million dollars in state funding in July of this year.

The budget reflects, and testimony you have heard today indicates, that no money has been taken from behavioral health. In fact millions of dollars have been taken from community behavioral health. Most of this money has been allocated to the prisons for addiction and mental health treatment. While that is certainly important, my experience has taught me that if you pull money for these same services from the community, more people are going to end up in the prison system.

And, we all know for every one dollar spent in the community it takes seven dollars to house and serve a person in the penal system.

When Medicaid expansion occurred it freed up community and state dollars that enabled us to build prevention programs for hard to reach youth in the schools, employ people to assist our clients with finding and keeping jobs, provide case management for our Veterans Housing project, employ a person to be a house monitor at a facility for men with mental health issues, provide down payments and rent to move people out of homelessness, provide housing subsidies for those persons with a major mental illness to live in a group home setting rather than the State Hospital and provide detox to people who would have died without it.

With money we received last year from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services for regional projects , which is now slated to be reduced to zero, we purchased increased staffing at our community reintegration program, Riverbend, purchased a hospital Navigator in partnership with Mahoning County to help people move out of the state hospital faster, opened a facility with Mahoning County that had been closed for four years that now houses people who are severely mentally ill and are returning from the state hospital, and are unable to live independently. All of the services and jobs that have been created that I just listed are in jeopardy now that 30 million dollars has been removed from the state's budget for our Boards.

Why do we build services one year only to dismantle them the next? Investing in, not removing money from community services will:

Decrease homelessness, which will attract more people to open businesses and buy homes in our community.

Reduce property crime, so often perpetrated by addicts in order to feed their habit, because they can't get treatment.

Increase our ability to provide a healthy, viable workforce in the state of Ohio.

We have been so faithful in appropriately spending our tax dollars. Please don't punish us by continuing to defund the programs we have built. People are suffering out here.

Please restore the \$20.1 million investment in regional alcohol, drug addiction and mental health crisis and housing programs that the General Assembly made last year in H.B. 483.

And restore the additional \$10 million the communities are losing through the state's reduction of 421 line item allocations and defunding the ex-offender grant and other programs we rely on.

Thank you for considering restoring funding to the community behavioral health system. Without it, more people really are going to be homeless, going to be incarcerated and are going to die.