



**Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
FY2018-2019 Operating Budget-Executive Proposal Testimony
The MetroHealth System
Dr. Joan Papp, Director, Office of Opioid Safety
March 23, 2017**

Good afternoon, Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today concerning the executive proposal for the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services budget. I am Dr. Joan Papp and I serve both as an emergency physician and as the newly appointed director of the Office of Opioid Safety at the MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland. I have also served the MetroHealth System and our community in northern Ohio as the Director of Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided with Naloxone), the largest and most comprehensive opioid overdose prevention program in the state saving over 800 lives and distributing more than five thousand naloxone kits since 2013.

Per recent CDC data, Ohio currently ranks third in the nation for total overdose deaths. The opioid epidemic that started in doctor's offices with prescription painkillers has evolved into a heroin epidemic. The epidemic accelerated more recently due to the widespread availability of the illicit drug fentanyl. Cuyahoga County is among the most devastated regions in our state. We had seen the number of heroin and fentanyl overdose deaths climb steadily each year since 2007. In 2016, we saw a doubling of our previous worst year on record- deaths climbed from 223 to over 500.

The Office of Opioid Safety at MetroHealth was created to address this crisis. Our mission is to improve opioid safety at MetroHealth and in the greater community through education, advocacy and treatment. As such, I come before you today to request your support for funding for the state's first Office of Opioid Safety, one we believe will serve as a model for others across the state.

Our goals for the Office includes broad education for all levels of our healthcare providers on how to safely prescribe opioids and manage the treatment of pain. Here, we have a track record of success. Since 2013, my program manager and I have participated in over 200 educational events to the community, to healthcare professionals, law enforcement, students, employers and policy leaders. We have delivered education throughout the region and across the state. In 2015, Metro Health hosted a daylong conference open to the public

addressing the stigma of drug abuse, which was supported by the Ohio Department of Health. We have done community forums on the weekends and on our days off. We have eagerly sought out these events not because it was in our financial or personal interest, but because it was the right thing to do for our patients and our community. Our work has been well received and we want to continue to grow and build on the relationship of trust we have built in our community. Without funding and additional staff, these efforts are unsustainable.

Amongst clinicians and patients, we will use our informatics data to identify those who would benefit from additional interventions. For providers who are struggling to coordinate care for complex patients, we are building resources to assist them. These resources will include education and communication skills workshops as well as a multidisciplinary care plan board made up of specialist providers who will aid in developing care plans for complex patients.

In our community, we will continue to lead advocacy efforts to improve patient safety and to address the many facets of the ongoing opioid epidemic. We have proven our commitment with our successful policy efforts to expand access to naloxone and to provide Good Samaritan protection for overdose responders. Internally, we have rewritten our opioid prescribing policy, developed policies for providing naloxone in our pharmacies and developed a peer review process to identify outlying opioid prescribers and re-educate them.

At MetroHealth, we collaborate with our community leaders in Cuyahoga County. We have worked alongside the Cuyahoga County Board of Health Opiate Task Force and The US Attorney's Heroin task force to address the epidemic in our community. The success of our collaboration was recently honored in Washington, DC by the US attorney general. One of our current efforts involves bringing together all of the major healthcare system leaders in the northern district of Ohio to develop a Heroin and Opioid Action plan.

Our goals are ambitious. To fight this epidemic, they need to be. We need funding to start our office in July to hit the ground running. To do so, this will require hiring staff immediately so that we can do the following:

- Train primary care physicians to incorporate medication assisted therapy into their practices
- Develop our educational curriculum and begin to schedule events and trainings for both our health care providers and the public
- Dedicate staff to revising and developing model policies and procedures



- Dedicate staff to develop a multidisciplinary care plan board
- Continue and expand our overdose prevention efforts
- Coordinate regional and statewide policy efforts
- Develop communication materials and targeted mailings

We are uniquely prepared and organized to take on the task of turning the tide on this epidemic. We have a track record of success and there is no limit to what we can accomplish with the appropriate resources. Moreover, we believe this can serve as a model for other communities around the state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I welcome any questions you may have.