

Ohio Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee

Testimony of Helen Jones-Kelley, Executive Director

Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services

Chairman Hackett, Vice-Chair Tavares, and members of the Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee.

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm Helen Jones-Kelley, executive director of Montgomery County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services. I am also here on behalf of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities.

As we are well aware of, especially in the Dayton area, the opioid crisis is a serious issue on many levels and lives are in the balance. Just as with mental illness, we know that early intervention is the best approach when it comes to addiction too.

We have struggled for years to get the mental health system. Funding for mental health treatment has been a low priority for decades. People with mental health illnesses and addiction have historically been discriminated against when seeking public and private insurance coverage and this continues to be a huge issue

Medicaid expansion has allowed many people who really need addiction treatment to get access to care. In Montgomery County, ADAMHS last year assisted 19,769 Medicaid recipients with services. So far this year, there have been 17 thousand served in just the first five months, so if anything the numbers indicate an increasing desire for help.

I am here today to urge you to continue funding in the House budget to continue Medicaid expansion for uninterrupted coverage to Ohioans who are dealing with mental illness and addiction by:

- Funding for nine (9) collaborative 16-bed withdrawal management centers at \$1 million per year to provide short term stabilization and detoxification services.
- \$12 million per year in appropriations for community-based services. We would use the funding to expand access and capacity for detox and withdrawal management, acute treatment services, and recovery supports.
- Funding for six (6) collaborative 16-bed Mental Health Crisis Centers at a \$1 million per year to expand capacity and extend access to mental health crisis stabilization beds throughout the state

If there are cuts to Medicaid services or an enrollment freeze, that is going to be a real problem not only to the people who need help, but also to our communities.

Mental health, substance use and behavioral health services are vital to our efforts to strengthen and stabilize our communities.

In addition with all the baby boomers aging right now, we are about to experience a silver tsunami. This is the worst possible time to freeze or reduce Medicaid enrollment.

Thank you for allowing me to present my concerns and I am available to answer any questions you may have for me.