

Ohio Senate Finance, Health, and Medicaid Subcommittee

Testimony of:

Gary Thomas – Alcoholic/Addict in Recovery

May 17, 2017

Good morning Chairman Hackett, Vice-Chair Tavares, and honorable members of this Senate of the great State of Ohio.

My name is Gary Thomas, and as you can see I am no longer a young man. I am 60 years old, extremely blessed to still be alive, and represent an age demographic that many of you can identify with.

I attended college right out of high school and obtained a degree in manufacturing engineering. It was during my college years when I began experimenting with alcohol and other drugs. But by the time I reached my late 20's, my addiction to substances had gotten out of control, and I remained in addiction for most of the next 30 years.

I have been clean and sober 5 ½ years out of the last 6. I did have a relapse about a year ago, but I was blessed to be given the opportunity to be a participant in an outpatient program at Madison County Mental Health and Addiction Services. Throughout my years in addiction, I had previously been in 4 inpatient and 2 outpatient programs. But the program operated by Madison County Mental Health and Addiction Services is by far the most comprehensive and operated by the most caring, passionate staff I have ever been associated with. They have given me my life back.

Of the consequences I've brought upon myself, the hardest one to deal with is the loss of the relationship with my only daughter, who just recently gave birth to my only granddaughter. As a result of the program at Madison County Mental Health and Addiction Services, I now have the opportunity to reconcile with my daughter, and for my granddaughter to get to know me as the good, clean, sober man I am. Also, at the end of this summer's college semester, I will graduate with another degree – one that I will use to become a licensed chemical dependency counselor. So if you want to hear more success stories like mine, it is no mystery that more funding is needed.

In regard to funding, from a pragmatic standpoint, when I was in business I was in control of capital investments – mainly investing capital in production equipment. I would research as to which piece of equipment was the most efficient and the most productive - the piece of equipment which would best maximize my investment. If I was to compare the organizations lobbying for funding here today, to a piece of machinery – I would bet that in comparing like programs, their success rate would be among the highest in the state. And in addition to the quantity of success, they also produce a high-quality product. Therefore, I believe they would be very good stewards of your investment.

Lastly, I have learned through years of experience that taking action in one's recovery is the key to success. As many of you know, addicts can make anything come out of their mouths. Good plans, promises, and good intentions that are never followed up with any action. Just all talk. I have coined a phrase that I use throughout the recovery community in Madison County. The phrase is; "It's time to quit just **talking** about it – it's time to **be** about it." It is in this vein that I urge all in this Senate to join us in "being about it"!

Thank you for this opportunity to share.

Gary Thomas