

Ohio Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee

**Testimony of:
Nathan Crago, Person in Long term recovery
May 16, 2017**

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

My name is Nathan Crago and I am a person in long term recovery from opiate addiction. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share my story today.

For as far back as I can remember I have lived with the disease of addiction. Whether it was my grandfather drinking Martini's on the front porch while I played in yard, sitting next to my father on a bar stool every other weekend, or my own insatiable desire for the next thing that was going to make me feel good, addiction has always been present in my life.

I grew up in fairly normal household despite having divorced parents and an alcoholic father. Both of my parents worked hard and provided for my sister and I. I was taught right from wrong and I had good moral and values instilled in me. I was taught to respect my elders, work hard at everything I do, and take pride in my work. I was not exposed drugs, violence, or physical or sexual abuse. For the majority of my life I grew up in the suburb of Beavercreek and lived in a very nice home with my mother and step-father. I had most of what I wanted and everything I needed.

Despite having what most would consider great life in a great home, I felt something was always missing inside. There was always emptiness and a feeling of discontent. I tried filling this emptiness with food and toys and shoes and clothes and every nice new shiny thing that I thought would "complete" me. Eventually I experimented with alcohol and at about age 13 I found what had been "missing." From that day until I entered Christopher House at age 22 I chased that feeling of contentment through any means necessary. Eventually that meant injecting heroin into my arm.

On July 20th of this year I will have 15 years clean and I am currently the manager of the facility that saved my life. Thankfully, back when I sought help, long term residential treatment was available and had relatively short wait times. Otherwise I would not be here today. The epidemic that is upon us today has tripled and in some places quadrupled wait times. Currently, at Christopher House, wait times are on average 4-8 weeks. Most addicts give up or become totally discouraged when they hear this.

I would like to ask that we remove the barriers, such as the IMD law, that are keeping organizations such as the one that employs me from expanding and serving more of the addicted population. I would also like to ask that more focus and funding is directed towards detox, long-term residential treatment facilities, recovery housing, and community recovery support centers.

In my nearly 15 years of recovery and 13 years in the substance use field I have seen many miracles. Those miracles were primarily a result of long term treatment, stable housing, and community support. If we could turn our focus towards these few things, we could create many, many, more miracles. When just one addict gets clean and stays clean, many lives are forever changed and tens of thousands

of dollars are saved in incarceration and medical fees. Let's come together and put the focus and money where it belongs. Thanks for listening.