



**Ohio Senate
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid
FY2018-2019 Operating Budget Testimony
The MetroHealth System
Dr. Joan Papp, Director, Office of Opioid Safety
May 24, 2017**

Good afternoon, Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Tavares, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. 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 900 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. Cuyahoga County is among the most devastated regions in our state. In 2016, we saw a doubling of our previous worst year on record- deaths climbed from 223 to over 500 and are currently at pace to eclipse 650 this year.

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

Our goals for the Office are many. Most importantly, we are focused on reducing the prescribing of opiates beyond what the Governor has recently announced. We believe this can be achieved through targeted education for all levels of our healthcare providers on how to safely prescribe opioids and manage the treatment of pain. Here we have a demonstrated commitment to this important work. Since 2013, my program manager and I have participated in over 200 educational events for 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 supported by the Ohio Department of Health and we have a second conference scheduled just next month to educate healthcare providers on safer opioid prescribing. We have



eagerly sought out opportunities 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 both 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 will build 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 and developed a peer review process to identify outlying opioid prescribers and re-educate them.

Our goals are ambitious. To fight this epidemic, they need to be. To be successful in our efforts we will be required to hire 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

We are uniquely prepared and organized to take on the task of turning the tide on this epidemic. As such, we would ask that you amend House Bill 49 to allow for Pay for Success contracts as proposed in the bill to include opiate treatment and education. 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.