



Mental Health America of Franklin County
Testimony in Support of SB56
Kenton Beachy, Executive Director
March 7, 2017
Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Minority Member Tavares, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 56.

My name is Kenton Beachy, and I am Executive Director of Mental Health America of Franklin County. Our mission is to transform how people think about mental illness, make it easier to get help, and give people the support they need to get better and stay better. We envision a community without barriers to achieving mental health where no one feels alone on their road to recovery. And we believe that reforming step therapy is an important part of removing barriers to achieving mental health.

Specifically, for many mental health consumers, access to the full range of the most effective medications is a crucial component of successful treatment and recovery. We see such medically necessary psychotropic medications, and their combination with other services and supports, as essential to permit people with mental health and substance use conditions to recover and lead healthy and productive lives.

We know that mental health treatment is complex, and studies show that medications in the same class for the treatment of mental illness are not interchangeable the way medications in other classes may be. Policies such as fail first, or step therapy, are one-size-fits-all. Step therapy policies do not acknowledge that physicians and consumers should make individualized treatment decisions, recognizing the unique and non-interchangeable nature of human beings and psychotropic medications. Lack of access to the right medication has serious human as well as financial consequences.

Fail first requirements restrict access to medically necessary medication. Failing treatment will often have serious negative consequences for mental health consumers and their families and communities. Failed treatment often results in serious symptoms jeopardizing job performance and continued employment, housing arrangements, and family relationships, and sometimes results in hospitalization.

Mental Health America of Franklin County supports SB56 because

- it allows automatic exceptions to step therapy requirements when a patient is already successfully being treated with another medication, and when it is in the best interests of the patient;
- it requires a transparent and easily accessible mechanism for a physician to request an override; and
- it ensures that step therapy programs are based on clinical guidelines developed by independent experts.

Senate Bill 56 will minimize barriers to the individualized treatment that patients need to achieve mental health.

On behalf of the clients we serve and all Ohioans with mental health and substance abuse issues, I respectfully ask your support of Senate Bill 56.

I would be happy to answer any questions.