



Testimony before the  
Senate Finance Subcommittee and Health and Medicaid  
**House Bill 166**  
May 14, 2019

Chairman Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee and Health and Medicaid, I am Julie Miller, Health Commissioner of the Knox County Health Department and President of the Association of Ohio Health Commissioners (AOHC). Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony regarding HB 166. AOHC applauds Governor DeWine for presenting a budget proposal that prioritizes the health of Ohioans, especially our most vulnerable citizens – moms and babies, medically fragile children, those suffering from mental health and addiction, and at-risk youth, to name just a few.

We support the recommendations of Recovery Ohio. I will specifically mention three – harm reduction, community engagement, and data coordination. Local health departments throughout Ohio are actively involved in the distribution of naloxone in their communities. We also support the other critical aspects of harm reduction – communicable disease prevention and pathways to treatment, as part of a comprehensive program to reduce the untoward impact of addiction. Most local health departments statewide are the leaders in convening community coalitions around the issues of addiction and mental health, recognizing the necessity of working with others in the community to maximize the impact of scarce resources. Also, as health planning leaders, local health departments are on the forefront of collecting and using data to drive decisions in their communities – recognizing that each community may present unique challenges.

AOHC supports the proposal to raise the legal age to 21 for individuals purchasing tobacco and nicotine-containing products. We join other interested parties in our efforts to work with ODH to strengthen the proposal in the bill – specifically as it relates to enforcement – who gets charged for what - and funding for compliance checks and follow-up. We know from the implementation of SmokeFree Ohio that effective enforcement is critical for assuring compliance. We ask for your support of changes offered to improve the language currently in House Bill 166.

We are concerned about the loss of the various fatality review processes, specifically the drug overdose fatality review and pregnancy-associated mortality review boards. At the local level, we have learned a great deal from the child fatality review process, and we strongly believe the same could be true in the case of overdose and pregnancy related deaths. The explicit statutory authority for these reviews is critical in assuring that complete and relevant information is available for an effective review, while maintaining as much individual confidentiality as possible. The fatality data is essential in assessing and addressing root cause and implementing strategies to will help to stem the epidemics mental health and addiction, as well as infant mortality – two of the critical priorities for improving the health and wellbeing of our citizens.

Lastly, AOHC is in support of the creation of the H2Ohio fund. Local health departments throughout Ohio work in our communities to help address non-point source pollution which can lead to water quality problems including harmful algal blooms. A long-term funding plan is important to address issues around water quality and protect our valuable water resources. The creation of this fund will allow water quality initiatives, ranging from agricultural concerns to local sewage treatment systems, to have a long term impact on water quality. We look forward to working with the administration on initiatives to solve this important issue.

Thank you for your valuable time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.