



HOPEWELL

HEALTH CENTERS

The mission of Hopewell Health Centers, Inc. is to provide access to affordable, high quality, integrated health care for all.

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May 13, 2019

Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid
Testimony on Substitute House Bill 166-May 14, 2019

Dear Chairman Hackett:

As the CEO of Hopewell Health Centers, it is my pleasure to write this letter in support of The Ohio Primary Care Workforce Initiative (OPCWI). Our agency has been a participant for the last four years and it has had significant impact in our ability to increase access to care for the individuals we serve.

Hopewell Health Centers is a federally qualified health center and community health center providing integrated care in nine counties in Southeast Ohio (Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Meigs, Perry, Ross, Vinton, and Washington). HHC's integrated continuum of care is inclusive of primary care, mental health, substance misuse/use treatment, medication assisted treatment, WIC, early childhood development and oral health. One of our greatest barriers to increasing access to healthcare is the ability to recruit and retain quality clinical staff.

Across the service area, there are considerable gaps in health care access. Multiple townships in Athens, Hocking, Perry, and Ross counties are designated as MUA/MUP and all of Jackson, Meigs and Vinton counties hold this designation. Perry, Ross, and Vinton counties also hold HPSA designations for primary care, and all seven counties hold HPSA designations for oral and behavioral health. The ratio of primary care providers to residents is 59.12 to 100,000 which is less than the state ratio (76.77 to 100,000) and the national ratio (77.72 to 100,000). Dentists are in even greater shortage with the ratio for the region being 31.19 to 100,000 individuals in comparison to the state average of 39.12 to 100,000 and national average of 52.93 to 100,000. Given the opiate epidemic that challenges Southeast Ohio, our greatest concern is the lack of adequate behavioral health workforce members. The ratio in our region is 1 behavioral health provider per 850 individuals in comparison to the state ratio of 1 per 700 individuals and the national average of 1 per 390 individuals.

Through OPCWI, we have been able to make significant impact in addressing the workforce challenges our region faces. Since 2015, our clinical staff precepted 165 medical and behavioral health students. 72 of these were in behavioral health fields

(counseling/social work). We hired 36 of these students (2 APN's and 34 BH students). Of the 34 students hired; 24 are still with us four years later—I believe this represents the higher retention that occurs when students complete their training in our area. Of the 24 we hired; 7 are now precepting their own students or are contributing to leadership at Hopewell in some capacity.

As you can see, we are only able to provide a comprehensive array of services if we have a strong, sustainable workforce. The Ohio Primary Care Workforce Initiative (OPCWI), housed at the Ohio Department of Health (AL1440-465) has allowed Hopewell to continue its mission of a "Integrated Healthcare for All" and to make strides in realizing its vision of "A community where everyone has a healthy mind, body, and spirit."

On behalf of the patient and communities in Southeast Ohio served by Hopewell Health Centers, I respectfully request full restoration of the state's investment of the OPCWI program in the state biennial budget, House Bill 166. Please feel free to reach out if you would like to know more about the OPCWI Program at our Health Center or if you would like to learn more about the innovative care we provide.

Sincerely,



Mark Bridenbaugh, CEO
Hopewell Health Centers, Inc.

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