



**Testimony of Scott S. Osiecki  
Chief Executive Officer of the ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County**

**Ohio Senate Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee  
May 15, 2019**

Good morning Chairman Hackett, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Thomas, Senator Antonio, and members of the Health and Medicaid Subcommittee.

My name is Scott S. Osiecki, and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony regarding the importance of keeping and expanding available treatment and recovery services for individuals living with mental illness and/or addictions.

Four hundred sixteen lives were lost to opioid overdoses in Cuyahoga County in 2018, which was a very slight decline from 522. However, that number is fragile for 2019, as fentanyl is still ravaging the community and has made its way into other drugs, such as cocaine and methamphetamine. Although overall opioid deaths may have decreased, deaths have significantly increased for African American males, particularly in conjunction with fentanyl-laced cocaine. Since January, 32 African American males have died, with a projection of 96 by the year's end.

The ADAMHS Board has increased access to withdrawal management beds, Medication Assisted Treatment and harm reduction efforts such as fentanyl test strips. We also funded transportation to treatment, housing, and peer support programs to assist clients obtain and maintain recovery.

The ADAMHS Board leads the Cuyahoga County Suicide Prevention Coalition and funds our partners to address prevention, early intervention for at risk youth and adults and increased crisis beds. This is incredibly important as Cuyahoga County has seen an increase in deaths by suicide in 2018, especially for men ages 44-80. We fund a crisis hotline, crisis chat and the mobile crisis team which is available to all citizens of Cuyahoga County.

Although we can offer these services now with various grant funding from OhioMHAS – we could and should do more – but we may not be able to offer them in the future without increased, flexible, timely and sustainable funding from OhioMHAS. The Boards represent the people we serve and the residents of each Board area have different needs. With flexible funding to Boards, the services would be tailored to meet the demand and needs of the community, rather than the services being tailored to fit the funding.

Crisis services are needed. Let me share a real-life story. During First Responder Appreciation Week in 2018, Maureen, a resident of a western suburb of Cleveland was delivering tokens of appreciation to the local fire department. During the visit, she actually had the chance to thank the Fairview Park firefighter who saved her son from an opioid overdose in the MetroParks – which was a turning point of his life. He is now living successfully in recovery. Unfortunately, this same mother lost her other son who was an alcoholic and died by suicide. I share her family story to let you know that crisis services do work – but we need more of them – and we need sustainable funding to provide for 24-hour staffing and promote the availability of the crisis services.

We know that treatment works and people recover. We also know that we can improve lives through wellness, recovery and independence. I ask you today if we can continue to work together to put clients first and support recovery.

Thank you for your time and consideration.