

Testimony on Sub H.B. 166: Main Operating Budget for FY 2020-2021

Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

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Philanthropic and Community Coalition to End the Opioid Epidemic in Lorain County

Good morning Chairman Hackett, Vice Chair Huffman and Ranking Member Thomas, my name is Don Sheldon. I am a former Emergency Physician and President of Elyria Regional Healthcare System and President, Community Hospitals, of the Western Region of University Hospitals. I have since retired but remain active with numerous community boards and foundations in Lorain County.

I am a primary lead of the Philanthropic and Community Coalition to End the Opioid Epidemic in Lorain County (the Coalition). The Coalition was formed two years ago through a collaboration among the Nord Family Foundation, the Community Foundation of Lorain County and the Black River Education and Wellness Foundation, along with other community agencies and services in Lorain County to address this crisis in our community. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 166.

As you know, Ohio ranks second nationwide in the rate of deaths from opioid overdose. Lorain County is an epicenter of this devastation. Within our population of just over 300,000 citizens:

- Approximately 61,000 people in Lorain County suffer from mental illness
- Roughly 35,000 people have misused or abused opioids in 2016
- Nearly 10,000 people have a substance use disorder
- And nationwide statistics show approximately 50% of people with substance use disorders have a co-occurring mental illness

The Coalition is focused on creating a crisis stabilization center in Lorain County because our need is so critically dire. Currently, Lorain County has no such center, and patients are taken either to expensive emergency departments where they receive suboptimal treatment, or to jails where true care is almost nonexistent.

The crisis stabilization center in Lorain County will be modeled after best practices we have seen elsewhere in the country. After commissioning an in-depth environmental scan to assess the needs in our county, we set out to find these best practices. We visited Phoenix and Tucson in Arizona, Newark, Delaware and Fairfax and Arlington, Virginia. Each of these centers, along with others studied in Akron and Durham, North Carolina to name a few, had components of best practices found across our country.

The sites we visited were staffed 24/7/365 with nurses, medical support, and recovery specialists, and provide a dedicated emergency entrance for referrals by first responders, hospitals and as a welcoming front door for anyone seeking help in a time of mental health or addiction crisis. Crisis stabilization centers have the ability to place people in an observation setting to

assess their needs, and in many cases, crisis situations are de-escalated without the need for expensive hospital admission. We observed that:

- Only 35% needed to stay at the crisis center longer than 23 hours.
- 91% of people were treated without needing hospital admission.

For the 35% of people that need a longer stay than 23 hours, subacute beds will be available. There are currently no subacute detox beds in Lorain County.

The Coalition in Lorain County is seeking state support to bring a state-of-the-art crisis stabilization model to Lorain County. While this model is being practiced in other places in our country, to date, no such center is fully implemented in the state of Ohio. **We believe Lorain County is an ideal location to invest.**

We are working together:

- Our dedicated efforts include representation from the ADAS and Mental Health boards, multiple agencies and providers, first responders, hospital systems, local governments, as well as the philanthropic and faith communities.
- We are working with the schools to implement an educational curriculum throughout the county with a focus on developing cognitive skills and trauma sensitive programming. This effort is based on best practice models being implemented in the Indianapolis, Marion County area lead by the Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation. We will be coordinating this effort with the initiative recommended by RecoveryOhio and the DeWine administration.
- We are educating the business community. In collaboration with the National Safety Council, we brought one of their national leaders to town. The purpose of this presentation was to help companies increase their awareness, understanding, and readiness to address the problems drugs bring to the workplace, promote workplace safety, and to outline the merits of worker rehabilitation programs.

In conclusion, we believe that the state's investment in Lorain County will be extremely worthwhile. As Lorain has been laying the groundwork with public and private supporters on efforts to open a crisis stabilization center with private support committed by local foundations, we are requesting that \$2.5 million be dedicated over the biennium for a pilot project in Lorain County. The House budget has committed \$1 million in FY '20 and \$250,000 in FY '21 for this project.

Thank you for your attention and I am happy to address any questions you may have.