



House Criminal Justice Committee
Written Testimony on SB 2

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March 11, 2021

Chairman LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 2. My name is Scott Sylak and I am the Executive Director of the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County.

I am writing in support of SB 2 because we need better tools designed to improve public safety and treatment outcomes for individuals with mental health disorders when they intersect with the criminal justice system. It is my opinion that if used effectively, SB 2 should ensure that Ohio's state psychiatric hospitals are serving patients with the most acute clinical needs while creating a pathway for individuals with mental illness who pose less of a public safety risk to be effectively treated in the community. The preservation of precious state hospital resources for those most in need will not only improve outcomes for some of the most acute individuals in our community, it will also support those individuals diverted to community care while maintaining the ability for an immediate hospitalization if needed.

It is my opinion that SB 2 seems to strike a reasonable balance between an individual's right to be treated in the least restrictive environment while maintaining adequate public safety measures.

Additionally, I support Ohio joining PSYPACT. During the COVID Pandemic, we have learned that telepsychiatry services can be an effective tool in assuring continued engagement in necessary behavioral health treatment services. Assuring continued access to one's provider will improve continuity of care and treatment outcomes. Joining PSYPACT simply makes sense.

Complex social issues rarely have simple solutions. Senator Gavarone's tenacity in working through the many complexities of this legislation in an attempt to meet individual and community needs is commendable. When passed, we will need to continue to work together as we strive to ensure that all Ohioans are able to access and receive high-quality, culturally competent, and inclusive mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Should you have any questions, please contact me at ssylak@lcmhrsb.oh.gov.

