



Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee

Written Testimony on SB 2

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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 Cheri Walter, and I am the CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities. We represent Ohio's Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Boards.

I am writing in support of SB 2. While there is no single or simple solution for meeting all the inpatient and outpatient mental health needs of Ohioans, including those involved with the court system, we believe that this bill is a step in the right direction.

SB 2 provides a pathway for a community-based competency restoration for individuals with a mental illness who are charged with a misdemeanor or non-violent felony and are ordered to undergo an evaluation by the court. There remains an ability for an immediate hospitalization if the individual is in need of immediate care.

Used effectively, this language should help to ensure that Ohio's state psychiatric hospitals are serving clients with acute clinical needs and those individuals involved in the criminal justice system as a result of their mental illness, who can be most effectively served outside of an inpatient setting, are able to access community-based care.

We appreciate the efforts of Senator Gavarone to work through the many complexities of this legislation in order to try to most effectively meet individual and community needs. This is a complicated issue, and we will need to continue to collectively 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 when and where they need them.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Should you have any questions, please contact me at cwalter@oacbha.org.