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**Representative Mike Loychik
The Ohio House of Representatives**

HB 356 – Rep. Mike Loychik, Sponsor Testimony, November 10, 2021

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 356, commonly referred to as the Comprehensive Ohio Drug Addiction Solution or CODAS.

HB 356 is a reintroduction of HB 698 and 699 from the 133rd General Assembly, though this bill has been in the works for the last six years and was originally worked on by former Speaker Pro Tempore Jim Butler.

According to preliminary data from the CDC, there is a 30% rise in drug overdose deaths from 2019 to 2020, with COVID-19 preventative measures playing a major role in the increase, among many other issues. Most states are on track to have the deadliest year yet. Additionally, in a report by the Surgeon General in 2018, substance-use disorder costs the country \$504 Billion annually in health-care and criminal-justice spending, as well as in lost productivity. This is nearly double the cost of major chronic diseases like Alzheimer's, diabetes, and cancer. This bill is designed to work to address the epidemic in Ohio as a result of opiates, heroin, fentanyl, and other such drugs.

One of the current problems with the way we address the crisis is that our penalties for dealers are pathetically weak. Under current law, a dealer with no prior record who sells heroin to 49 people cannot be sent to prison and typically gets a slap on the wrist or very short jail sentence measured in weeks or even days. With such light sentences, they do not often reveal their suppliers. This bill would raise the minimum penalty of drug trafficking to that of armed robbery (F2) and making it an offence of violence. Those who commit armed robbery do it for money and often kill people, how is drug trafficking any different? Further by adding a ten year post-release control and making them subject to searches during this period, it makes convicted dealers unemployable as traffickers in Ohio.

Another problem with the crisis is the way we address treatments for opiate addiction. Right now they are not sustained long-term, and are ineffective – with success rates less than 10%; the number of relapses averaging 6 to 7. The brain of those severely addicted takes a long time to heal, 30 to 90 days doesn't cut it. It often takes 24 to 36 months to see significant improvement; by three years the risk of relapse has fallen by 90%. This

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bill would create a new program for those arrested for possession and/or severely addicted by allowing them the option to choose long-term treatment for up to 3 years in lieu of conviction. This would get people with substance use disorder out of prison to free up jail space, while also providing them with the addiction services that they need in order to recover.

Thank you once gain for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 356. I would also like to thank Representative Bird for joint sponsoring this bill with me and former Speaker Pro Tempore Jim Butler for his relentless work on this language. I will now turn it over to my Joint sponsor Rep. Bird.