

**Testimony to the Ohio Senate Finance Committee**  
**House Bill 110 Testimony**  
**May 13, 2021**

Good morning Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 110 on provisions related to Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health (ADAMH) Service Boards. My name is Caleb Stidham, and I am a former board member for the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Erie & Ottawa Counties and the Erie County Treasurer-elect.

During my tenure on our local ADAMH board, I found the board to be dysfunctional and unresponsive to the needs of our community. Our local board has been this way for many years. It cannot be blamed on one group of board members, one director, or any other individual, but a combination of factors. Additionally, I came to understand that the statutory structure and function of ADAMH boards were not meeting the needs of our community and others across the state.

Current law stipulates that all ADAMH boards must be 18 members and the legislature previously opened a short window to allow existing boards to shrink down to 14 members. Current law dictates that the boards of county commissioners in the service district are responsible for ten of the eighteen appointments and that the State Director for Mental Health and Addiction Services is responsible for eight appointments. In practice, the director of the local ADAMH board has influence on the eight state appointments, even though the board is responsible for oversight of the director. ADAMH boards receive federal and state dollars, and many collect local tax levies.

After stepping down from the board earlier this year, I, along with other Erie County stakeholders contacted our legislators to discuss potential changes to Section 340 of the Ohio Revised Code which governs ADAMH boards. We sought to give local communities more flexibility and oversight over their ADAMH boards. And we wanted to have minimal impact on boards around the state that are functioning properly.

Due to the work of State Representative DJ Swearingen and others in the Ohio House, several provisions were added to HB 110 that reform ADAMH boards. Senator Gavarone has picked up this issue in the Senate and has drafted an amendment after stakeholder feedback from many individuals and organizations on all sides of this issue. I support Senator Gavarone's amendment and advocate for its addition to HB 110.

The amendment has the following impact on ADAMH boards:

- Creates a three-year window to allow boards of county commissioners to change the size of ADAMH boards to 7 to 9 members. County commissioners must hold a public hearing and invite the ADAMH board to participate.
- Allows newly established boards to choose any of the following sizes: 7 to 9 members, 14 members, or 18 members.

- Changes the appointment ratio of ADAMH boards. The State receives 2 appointments for 7 to 9 member boards, 3 appointments for 14 member boards, and 4 appointments for 18 member boards.
- Reduces the number of state mandated positions down to 2 and clarifies that both the State Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services as well as the boards of county commissioners are responsible for those appointments.

This amendment achieves both the goals that I stated earlier. The amendment allows counties to shift to a smaller board size if it works for their communities. It gives county commissioners, who are elected, more oversight over ADAMH boards. And the amendment reduces burdensome state mandates while preserving the necessary role of individuals who have received mental health or addiction services.

In addition, the amendment makes minimal changes for boards that are functioning well. In communities where the ADAMH board is working collaboratively with stakeholders and elected officials, we are confident that there would be no changes in outcome.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Caleb Stidham  
Erie County Treasurer-elect