



Testimony of Scott S. Osiecki
Chief Executive Officer
Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County
Ohio House Finance Committee
HB 33
March 30, 2023

Chairman Edwards, Ranking Member Sweeney, and esteemed members of the House Finance Committee, I am Scott Osiecki, the Chief Executive Officer of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony and inform you that the ADAMHS Board of Directors and staff are in support of funding being requested by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. I take this opportunity seriously as the opioid epidemic continues to evolve and claim lives and the severity of mental illnesses continues to increase.

As the local authority responsible for the planning, funding, and monitoring of public mental health and substance use treatment and recovery services, the ADAMHS Board is charged with maintaining a robust continuum of care, including prevention, crisis, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support services to the residents of Cuyahoga County. I want to highlight that crisis services providing stabilization and linkages to services are one of the most important services for any individual experiencing a mental health and/or substance use crisis.

In Cuyahoga County, access to crisis services begins with a phone call, text or chat to the ADAMHS Board's 24-hour Suicide Prevention, Mental Health/Addiction Crisis, Information and Referral Hotline for Adults and Children operated by FrontLine Service, which is (216) 623-6888 or now can be reached by dialing 988. The ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County fully supports the funding of 988 call, text and chat services throughout the state. However, I ask that this funding be allocated to the local ADAMHS Boards through the 421 line item, rather than directly to the hotline providers. This would allow for local Boards to blend state funding with local funding to ensure that services are provided in a manner that meets local need, as well as make decisions on long-term funding. There are also discussions being had regarding federal dollars being used to fund 988 on a per call basis – which would further place a burden on local Boards as any crisis system must be operated on a “Firehouse” model – where it must be staffed 24/7 regardless of the number of calls received. This

would be a funding mistake as in Cuyahoga County 82% of the 62,413 calls came into our local hotline number from January 2022 through February 2023, while 18% were from dialing 988. We know that with further advertising and fixes to geocoding, 988 calls will go up, but a funding based on a per call basis is not a model for sustainability.

We also support the \$40 million in funding across the biennium to further develop crisis services and crisis infrastructure. We recently received instructions on how Boards can utilize the one-time ARPA dollars for crisis infrastructure in partnership with other Boards within our state behavioral health hospital collaboratives. However, funding is needed to fully operate a step-down unit for people to continue to receive treatment services after being stabilized in the hospital, as well as a 24/7 crisis center. This increased funding for the SFY24/25 budget is another example that would allow local ADAMHS Boards to blend local and state dollars to fully support crisis expansion.

The ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County funds a network of over 70 provider agencies, which are all experiencing a workforce shortage – which is not uncommon among my peers across the state. This shortage is a result of not enough young people going into this field, cost of education, licensure obstacles, low compensation for a stressful job and burnout of existing staff. There is a helpful solution to start addressing this issue in HB 33 – and that is the proposal from the Ohio Department of Medicaid for a 10% rate increase for community behavioral health services totaling \$220 million; \$30 million for Mental Health Peer recovery support services; and 6% rate increase for inpatient services in free standing psychiatric hospitals and acute psychiatric units of hospitals totaling \$130.1 million. On behalf of our provider network in Cuyahoga County and all providers in the state's behavioral health system, we support this funding as a step in the right direction, and I respectfully ask you to consider going further by recommending an increase in rates of 20% to help our behavioral health workforce meet the growing demand. Providing higher reimbursement rates will allow the provider agencies to begin offering a living wage comparable to other healthcare professions and illustrate the importance of the behavioral field.

Safe housing for people living with a severe mental illness is a priority for the ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County and we are happy to see that OhioMHAS is seeking \$8 million per year in additional funding to increase the Residential State Supplement for Adult Care Facilities. My Board provides payments to operators through our Residential Assistance Program until the individual is approved for Social Security and the state's program. Our Adult Care Facility operators tell us that a rate increase is urgently needed as inflation has raised the cost of food, utilities, supplies and other necessities. Recovery Housing is equally important to the ADAMHS Board and we provide funding

through a Recovery Housing Network operated by two of our providers, so we fully support the request for \$2 million in additional funding.

I want to wrap-up where I started - the opioid epidemic continues to evolve and claim lives and the severity of mental illnesses continues to increase - that is why I support the requests for funding made by Lori Criss, the Director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and her team. I also respectfully ask you to support the requests, and even more, to help individuals and families living with a mental illness and/or substance use disorder.

Thank you.