



March 14, 2023

Cadence Care Network Proponent Testimony on HB 33

Chairwoman Carruthers, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 33, Governor DeWine's executive budget proposal for state fiscal years 2024-2025.

My name is Matt Kresic; I am the CEO of Cadence Care Network. Cadence Care Network is a non-profit organization that provides a wide array of behavioral health and foster care services to vulnerable children, young adults, and families across the Northern portion of Ohio.

Headquartered in Niles, which is located in Trumbull County, we have office locations in Ashtabula, Mahoning, Stark, Lucas, and Wyandot Counties but serve many contiguous and adjacent counties via home-based behavioral health and foster care services.

Last year, my organization was one of 18 organizations across the state to be selected as a Care Management Entity under the state's innovative OhioRISE plan. This program has already started to be a game changer for kids and families in Ohio.

During my 29 years in this field, I have seen child welfare organizations in Ohio, and across the United States, serve as de facto providers of behavioral health services for children and families.

Families, frustrated and seeking help, often become involved with child welfare systems as a result of their child's behavior. Their child's behavioral health symptoms become so unmanageable, and they often feel so isolated, alone, and helpless, that they turn over custody of their children to their local child welfare agency, just so that their child can be placed in a facility capable of meeting their needs, or so that they can receive the support they need to keep their child and family safe.

OhioRISE changes that! Families can now receive Intensive Care Coordination Services that do not require them to relinquish custody, creating an evidence informed wraparound approach that empowers families and keeps them together in the long run. In February alone, we were able to connect seven families to OhioRISE who we would normally have opened child welfare cases for.

These were families with kids who needed mental health services, and they did not have to relinquish custody or split their family up. They got the help they needed and we were able to avoid turning to more acute and costly care options.

During the last year, the 170 staff members at Cadence Care Network proudly provided behavioral health, prevention, or foster care services to over 3000 children who reside in our service areas. This may seem like a large number of staff or children, however, we only scratched the surface of the need.

Referrals for behavioral health services have more than doubled over the last year and the behavioral health crisis our children are facing will reverberate for generations if not appropriately addressed while they are still children. In order to do this, the behavioral health field needs a continued investment in educating people interested in entering the field and additional support via rate increases to allow organizations to pay staff what they truly deserve.

Salaries in behavioral health care positions are well below those for similar positions with similar education and licensure requirements in other health care and service sectors. In fact, current job openings offer 20% higher wages compared to the 2022 median salaries of a cross section of community behavioral health positions posted on Indeed.com.

Turnover rates increased to almost 40% in 2022 across the community behavioral health industry and are above 50% for larger organizations and those in urban settings. Residential treatment providers report operating at 50%-75% capacity because they are unable to recruit staff to expand care. In short, more investment is needed to sustain, attract, and retain the workforce in today's labor market while building the workforce needed for the future.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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