



Ohio Senate Finance Committee
HB 33 Testimony

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Lake County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board
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Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on HB 33. My name is Kim Fraser and I am the Executive Director of the Lake County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board.

For my Board, the most critical area of the state budget is the OhioMHAS 421 Continuum of Care line item (ALI 336-421). This line provides the most significant GRF allocation to ADAMH Boards, which we use to provide the statutorily-required Continuum of Care to residents of our communities. The budget passed by the Ohio House of Representatives will result in an approximately 15% cut in the base allocations to ADAMH Boards from the 421 line, as a result of a decrease from the as introduced total appropriation in the line and an increase in the number of items dedicated in that line. If left unchanged, this would result in a real dollar cut of over \$11 million from the approximately \$72 million ADAMH Boards have received from this line over the past several years.

In Lake County, a 15% cut in 421 funding would mean putting individuals with mental illness at risk. Our Lake County ADAMHS Board utilizes our 421 allocation to create foundational supports that allow individuals to thrive in our communities. The dollars are used for much-needed housing vouchers – in an environment where fair market rents have increased 23% in the past 2 years, our housing waiting lists exceed 500 individuals, and landlords can be very selective in who they house, our vouchers, coupled with 421 funded case management services supporting individuals in need, are absolutely vital. 421 funds are further used to support our crisis services, and provide counseling services for individuals struggling with the disease of addiction. Put simply, cuts to the 421 line puts the Lake County behavioral health safety net at risk.

To prevent this from occurring in Lake County, as well as similar impacts occurring across Ohio, we urge you to ensure that ADAMH Boards receive a base allocation of at least \$71,989,846 in each year of the biennium by supporting the inclusion of SC1080 in your version of the bill. This would ensure that ADAMH Boards could receive the same base allocation as we have in the last several years.

The other area of concern we have is the reduced allocation in the OhioMHAS Hospital Services Line (336-412) under the House version of the budget. The potential decrease in capacity levels at the state psychiatric hospitals and the inability to expand necessary bed capacity with this cut will be felt in every community across Ohio.

In Lake County, if state hospital operations cannot be sustained at current capacity levels, we will see more individuals languishing in our emergency departments and in our county jail. For the 300+ Lake Countians who present at our 2 local emergency departments every single month, the best course of action is often inpatient care. Without adequate inpatient psychiatric care available within the county, we depend upon the state psychiatric hospital system to provide comprehensive, coordinated care to help our citizens return to the community. If access decreases we'll undoubtedly see more and more individuals waiting longer and longer for appropriate care. The impact on our criminal justice system will be significant as well. For those forensic clients waiting in our jail for placement in the hospital, any delays in access result in greater strain on Sheriff Leonbruno and his jail staff, and greater financial burden on Lake County taxpayers who support the jail.

We encourage you to restore the OhioMHAS Hospital Service line to the as-introduced amount and to support the inclusion of SC1556 in your version of the bill.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I would be happy to answer any questions.