

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of the Biennial Budget. My name is Joe Trolian, I am the Executive Director of the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Richland County.

I am here to speak to you today as a liaison of the behavioral health system in Richland County. The Board partners in various ways with 16 organizations and multiple county departments to assure an efficient continuum of care to meet the needs of all who live in Richland County and can provide help when they need it.

In Am. Sub. HB 33 that was recently passed by the Ohio House of Representatives, decisions were made that will greatly impact the established programs as well as some of the new initiatives that have been slated to begin in State Fiscal 2024.

ALI 336-421 has resulted in an allocation to Richland County of \$1,295,563 annually for over a decade. This Continuum of Care line has given us the discretion to assist individuals with severe mental illness to obtain and maintain independent housing, through rent and housing assistance in community-based and board owned housing. These funds have also helped cover some of the cost of our Transitional Aged Youth Apartments. Wood Pointe is designed to work with youth 18-21 that are leaving foster placement, residential placement or have other concerns and help them develop independent living skills that can help them to live in community-based housing by the time he or she turns 21. Richland County, as has many communities in Ohio and across the country, has seen an increase in the number of unhoused individuals. Programs like these offer a tool to significantly impact the problem at the community level.

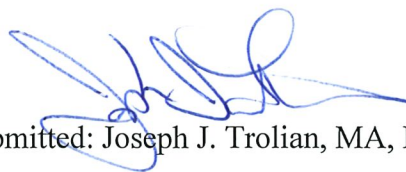
The Continuum of Care funds are also essential in allowing contract agencies of the Board to provide general outpatient services to individuals regardless of ability to pay. Richland County provides subsidies for individuals that are between 138% 200% of Federal Poverty to access services with a 10% co-pay for services. In addition, these funds were instrumental in opening our very first Behavioral Health Urgent Care in August of 2021. To date our urgent care has served approximately 1500 individuals, providing services when they needed them without an appointment and with no out of pocket expense. These funds have been essential as the individuals who seek assistance reach a point in their recovery where they would like to get back to work. We know that gainful, competitive employment will build an individual's view of self-worth, foster independence and increase the likelihood that an individual will stay on their road to recovery.

Finally, the Continuum of Care funds are playing an integral part in the planning of services to the 9 public school districts in Richland County. We began in 2020 to pilot some integrated interventions for junior high and high school. This program has begun to grow and solidify over the past few years, and it is our intention to establish a Wellness Team in all 9 school districts providing services 720 hours of service during the 23-24 school year. These teams have been a game changer in the schools where they are currently active. Allowing access to on-site, licensed mental health professionals, to intervene before and issue hits a crisis level in addition to providing education to staff, faculty on topical issues and reduce stigma. The Richland County Board feels this is an excellent investment in youth and the future, the more issues we can address when individuals are young and can build resilience, the less we may have to address when they become adults.

The ALI 336-421 line represents approximately 15-20% of the Richland County Board funding in any given year but has greater value in its flexibility to be able to be used to address individuals or needed services that may not be funded by more restrictive lines. In addition to the programs highlighted earlier, these funds are used in tandem with other dollars to support Service Enriched Housing, the crisis stabilization unit, the local warmline, Oasis club: a consumer drop-in center, suicide prevention in schools, Crisis Intervention Team training, guardianships for individuals with severe mental illness and our Positive Parenting Program. The loss of 15% of the 336-421 funding will have a significant impact to historic and new programming alike.

As we continue to see a continued increasing need for affordable and accessible housing, demands for services to address anxiety, loneliness and isolation and assist the schools to return to a sense of normalcy following COVID, this is not the time to see a reduction or realignment of funds. On behalf of the Richland County behavioral health system, I encourage the Ohio Senate to restore the ALI 336-421 line to the as introduced level and assure there is adequate funding outside of the set asides and earmarks to guarantee the ADAMH Boards received a minimum base allocation of \$71,989,846 in each year of the biennium.

Thank you for your time allowing me to share these concerns with each of you on behalf of the Richland County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board and partner agencies. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.



Respectfully Submitted: Joseph J. Trolan, MA, LPCC-S, LICDC-CS, Executive Director