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Senate Finance Committee
Written Testimony on Am. Sub. HB 33 (SFY 2024-25 Operating Budget)
May 25, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Amended Substitute House Bill 33, the operating budget for state fiscal years 2024-2025. I am Teresa Lampl, CEO of the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers (the Ohio Council). The Ohio Council is a statewide trade and advocacy association representing over 165 private businesses providing community-based prevention, substance use, mental health, and family services throughout Ohio. Our member organizations care for individuals and families across the lifespan by offering person-centered services and support.

Ohio's system of care for people in need of mental health and substance use disorder treatment is fractured due to an overwhelming need for care and insufficient human and financial capital to respond. Ohio communities, patients, and providers remain under tremendous stress because of the opioid epidemic and lingering effects of the pandemic. Too often, mental health and addiction conditions continue to be seen as moral failings – and treatment viewed as unsuccessful if a person is not “healed” after a brief period of days or weeks. In fact, mental illnesses and substance use disorders are chronic brain diseases that require appropriate interventions, clinical treatments, recovery supports, and social and spiritual help for a person to maintain long-term recovery.

Yet, we know that brain health is essential health. Healthy people are productive workers, engaged parents, and contributing members of our communities. Prevention, treatment, and recovery from mental illness and substance use are more than healthcare issues, they are also workforce issues. As Ohio brings new jobs that will grow our economy, we must attend to the human infrastructure necessary to support these new opportunities. Investing in the mental health of our workforce and their families is a smart decision that yields cost savings not only in total cost of healthcare, but also in criminal justice, child welfare, and other human services.

Today, more Ohioans of all ages need mental health and substance use services – yet most have difficulty accessing care due to the lack of available providers. Waiting times have become weeks and months rather than days and weeks.

- In 2021, 41% of Americans reported mental health or substance use need.
- The CDC reports that 57% of high school girls and 29% of high school boys experience symptoms consistent with major depression.
- A 2021 survey of parents conducted by Nationwide Children's Hospital, found 53% of working parents missed work at least one day a month to care for their child's mental health, and that their work performance was impacted by their child's needs.

- Simultaneously, the behavioral health workforce crisis has reached a breaking point – 380:1 is the ratio for patient demand compared to available practitioners.
- And wages for highly trained, licensed professionals are out of step with jobs in other sectors – for example, a Masters-level trained therapist makes a median salary of \$58,000 compared to a Food Services Manager with a high-school degree making \$53,000.

Because of these challenges, the Ohio Council applauds Governor DeWine for his leadership and bold vision for Ohio’s community behavioral health system, and his commitment to invest in the health and economic wellbeing of Ohio’s children, families, and communities so they have the tools to succeed and ability to thrive. Similarly, I want to acknowledge and thank the members of this committee and the entire Ohio General Assembly for your efforts in recent years to enhance behavioral health services and supports for Ohioans needing help. These investments have been critical in beginning to stabilize Ohio’s system and setting the stage for the development of a full continuum of behavioral health care. Indeed, the important policy initiatives and key funding investments included in this budget will pay dividends far into the future – and will act as a catalyst for the economic health of Ohio’s communities as today’s children are tomorrow’s students, workforce, and entrepreneurs.

With respect to key initiatives in the budget, I would like to highlight certain provisions that specifically address Ohio Council priority areas and offer a few recommendations.

Medicaid Behavioral Health Rate Increases

The Ohio Council supports the Department of Medicaid’s budget proposal and is very appreciative of the historic investments in the mental health and substance use disorder system. These targeted investments for the behavioral health workforce include:

- A 10% rate increase over the biennium for community behavioral health services totaling \$220 million;
- \$30 million for Mental Health Peer recovery support services;
- A 6% (all funds) rate increase for inpatient services in free standing psychiatric hospitals and acute psychiatric units of hospitals totaling \$130.1 million; and
- The Ohio House added approximately \$77 million or a 3.5% Medicaid rate increase for community behavioral health providers as part of its efforts to raise wages for direct care staff.

We are grateful for this recognition and investment in Ohio’s behavioral health services. These remarkable provider rate increases proposed by Medicaid and supported by the House, for the various healthcare provider groups (BH, DD, Aging) are encouraging steps in the right direction during this challenging and volatile labor market.

The behavioral health workforce encompasses a wide range of disciplines and educational levels, providing prevention, treatment, and recovery services for mental health conditions and substance use disorders. Salaries in behavioral health care positions are well below those for similar positions with similar education and licensure requirements in other health care sectors 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.

Accordingly, we respectfully ask you to support Amendment SC0243, which invests \$143 Million (all funds) in Medicaid community behavioral health services rates to stabilize and strengthen the behavioral health workforce. This request compliments the Governor's as introduced 10% rate increase (\$220 million all funds) and the 3.5% increase (\$77 million all funds) added by the House (ODM Section 333.29 of Am. Sub. HB 33). Data shows our system requires a 20% increase in Medicaid rates to keep up with inflationary costs and to recruit and retain a sufficient workforce.

Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

The Ohio Council applauds Director Criss and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) for its efforts to develop, strengthen, and enhance the community behavioral health system of care, and we strongly support the department's proposed budget. HB 33 would continue the DeWine administration's bold efforts and significant investments to address the promises of the past and begin to build a high quality, accessible system of care in all communities throughout Ohio. Specifically, we strongly support the continued investment in prevention and early intervention services; crisis stabilization centers and implementation of the 988-crisis line; expanded access to safe, quality recovery supports like peer recovery services and employment; and efforts to expand access to community forensic centers in order to decrease visits to emergency departments and jails.

We are equally supportive of proposed OhioMHAS policy and language changes to enhance quality provider services and support the well-being of persons receiving care in Ohio's community behavioral health system. The proposed changes will promote increased quality through the adoption of national accreditation for OhioMHAS certifiable mental health and substance use services, as well as require provider organizations to be in good standing in Ohio and other states where such organization operate. Additionally, OhioMHAS proposes to bolster quality through national accreditation for recovery housing, create a statewide registry of accredited recovery housing, and establish a process for reviewing quality concerns. **We oppose any amendments seeking to create exemptions to OhioMHAS' proposed quality standards.**

Am. Sub. H.B. 33 – as passed by the House

The Ohio Council appreciates the efforts of the Ohio House as it underwent the process of examining, deliberating, amending and ultimately passing Am. Sub. H.B. 33. We are very thankful for the increased resources directed toward home and community-based Medicaid provider rates, and for maintaining several key policy initiatives aimed at increasing quality and accreditation standards for mental health, substance use disorder, and recovery housing services. However, the House in passing its version of the budget did not fund certain key OhioMHAS programs and services at the level proposed by the Governor. **We respectfully ask the Ohio Senate to restore these OhioMHAS funding line-items to the Governor's as-introduced levels.** The investment in state hospital capacity, healthy kids, parents, and workers is an essential investment so we can fill new jobs and take advantage of opportunities to grow Ohio's economy.

OhioMHAS line-items to be restored to H.B. 33, As-Introduced levels:

- **Line item 336-412 Hospital Services:** Similar to community behavioral health providers, Ohio's state psychiatric hospitals are experiencing increasing costs associated with inflation, payroll, and lower commercial insurance reimbursement. Restore the as-introduced levels to support continued operations of Ohio's six regional hospitals and allow for planned expansion of 80 additional beds.
- **Line item 336-406 Prevention and Wellness:** This investment in prevention and early intervention services promotes wellness and reduces or delays impact and onset of mental illness and substance use.
- **Line Item 336-422 Criminal Justice Services:** This supports access to mental health and substance use services within Ohio's jails and prisons and enhances forensic services in local communities.
- **Line item 336-421 Continuum of Care:** Restoring funding provides sufficient funding for ADAMH Board to sustain funding at existing community levels and cover cost of dedicated funding initiatives.
- **Line item 336-510 Residential State Supplement:** This increased support ensures continued housing options for individuals with serious mental illness.

Student Wellness and Success Funding

The Ohio Council is pleased that Governor DeWine proposed in the budget and the Ohio House maintained in its substitute budget bill provisions that would continue the student wellness and success funding as part of the Fair School Funding formula; add greater safeguards to ensure funds are meeting the health and behavioral health needs of students; and require more transparency around the uses of this important funding. School-based behavioral health services are effective and efficient. Communities leverage existing partnerships between schools and community behavioral health providers to maximize workforce, overcome barriers to accessing care, and promote healthy school environments. Partnering with schools, community behavioral health providers offer a range of services including prevention, early intervention, consultation, treatment, and crisis de-escalation and behavioral management support services. These partnerships also support families with accessing care outside of the school day and school year.

While Ohio Council members have been engaged and providing services in schools for many years, the student wellness and success funding has expanded this opportunity to collaborate and contract with their school-district partners. A 2023 survey of Ohio Council members indicated that community behavioral health organizations are delivering services in 584 school districts, ESCs, alternative, private and charter schools and in nearly 3,000 school buildings across our state. Our survey data also indicates that schools are working with community behavioral health providers to expand onsite prevention or treatment services, as well as facilitate immediate access to crisis de-escalation and behavior management services. More than 1 out of every 3 providers are involved with conducting threat assessment services or planning for potential threats within the school district – and these funds have also supported consultation and training for educators and school administrators in response to the increased needs of our students resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly, this funding is making a difference in our schools and communities.

I encourage you to support the investment of student wellness and success funds in the Ohio Department of Education's budget. And I ask you to support or even strengthen the important safeguards included in HB 33 that would emphasize collaboration with community behavioral health partners, sets guardrails that prioritize use of these funds for physical and mental health services, and increases transparency and reporting on how these funds are used. I strongly believe that working together with community stakeholders, we can effectively prevent and treat the mental health needs our children and families are experiencing. As I have stated many times before, today's children are tomorrow's adults, parents, community leaders, workforce, and the key to our state's economic success.

Conclusion

The Ohio Council looks forward to working with the Ohio Senate, the Ohio House, and the DeWine Administration for the remainder of the budget process to advance sound policies, allocate resources to enhance community behavioral health providers, and most importantly help Ohioans seeking mental health and substance use disorder services to achieve health, wellness, and recovery.

Thank you for your time and consideration today.