



Senate Finance Committee

Written Testimony

Am. Sub. HB 33

(SFY 2024-25 Operating Budget)

May 30th, 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 Dustin McKee, the CEO of the Ohio Psychological Association (OPA). OPA represents the nearly 3,500 psychologists who currently practice in Ohio. Our state's psychologists practice in community and private settings, hospitals, businesses, and academia. Psychologists in Ohio are the scientist practitioners of the behavioral health (BH) system, producing the scientific research, innovation and knowledge about the best practices in behavioral healthcare. Our members leverage this psychological science and our clinical experience in both clinical and non-clinical settings to improve the mental health and wellness of Ohioans.

OPA has identified several key policy and advocacy priority areas, including:

- Addressing the Behavioral Health Workforce Crisis,
- Improving Access to Treatment and Services, Enforcement of Insurance Parity for Behavioral Health,
- Expanding Prevention Efforts and,
- Addressing Health Disparities in marginalized populations in our state.

The OPA was very appreciative to see that Governor's 'As Introduced' budget addresses all these priority areas. The Governor's budget builds on the substantial accomplishments of this Administration as well as the significant work of the Ohio General Assembly as a whole. We applaud Governor DeWine for this budget proposal's historic investments in mental health and substance use care.

We also applaud the Ohio House for building on the Governor's proposed investments in the Ohio Medicaid Community Behavioral Health rates. These increased resources directed toward home and community-based Medicaid provider rates will help address Ohio's behavioral health workforce crisis, and we urge the Ohio Senate to further increase rates to address the alarming shortage of behavioral health providers available to meet the historic surge in demand for services.

Consequently, we respectfully ask you to support Amendment SC0243, which provides \$143 Million (all funds) in Medicaid community behavioral health services rates to address the behavioral health

workforce crisis. This request builds on 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) to keep up with inflationary costs and to recruit and retain a workforce capable of making progress in addressing the behavioral health workforce crisis.

Additionally, **OPA respectfully ask the Ohio Senate to restore the following OMHAS funding line-items to the Governor's as-introduced levels:**

- **Line item 336-412 Hospital Services:** Please restore the as-introduced levels in this line item 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.

Despite our progress over the last several years, more work must be done to address the behavioral health needs of Ohioans. As others have indicated in their testimony, wait times in our state for behavioral health services continue to be too long, often lasting weeks and even months before individuals receive care. These wait times can be directly traced back to the need for significant and sustained investments in the behavioral health workforce in our state. By the time someone asks for help, their needs are urgent, so we cannot afford to allow wait times to be the norm in Ohio's behavioral health system. We owe it to our fellow citizens to be ready when they reach out for support.

Ohio must also continue its work exploring targeted investments in BH workforce development, which should include investments in tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness, scholarships and the like for individuals entering the behavioral health field.

Conclusion

We look forward to continuing to work with this Administration and members of the Ohio General Assembly to continue to address the mental health and addiction needs of our fellow Ohioans. Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony today.