

Senate Finance Committee
Testimony on Substitute House Bill 33
June 8, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Substitute House Bill 33, the state operating budget. My name is Charleta B. Tavares and I am the CEO of PrimaryOne Health. We are a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), serving 43,000+ patients in two Counties including two School-Based Health Centers opening in June and July. As a FQHC we are a one-stop shop for patients, we provide integrated health and behavioral health (mental health and substance use disorders including Medication Assisted Treatment) pediatrics, OB/GYN, internal medicine, vision, dental, nutrition, clinical pharmacy and physical therapy services. In addition, we provide a comprehensive Healthcare for the Homeless program serving over 1200 patients annually.

We commend Governor DeWine, his Administration, and the Ohio House of Representatives for their dedication to Ohio's health by prioritizing the well-being of Ohioans in the proposed FY 2024-2025 state operating budget. We applaud the Senate for investing in workforce and removing duplicative, burdensome regulations which could impact access to care.

PrimaryOne Health supports the following provisions and applauds the Senate for including/maintaining them in Substitute House Bill 33:

- Medicaid provider rate increase for FQHCs and FQHC LAs
- Removal of a duplicative, burdensome provision proposed by Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) that would have required FQHCs providing mental health and/or addiction services to be certified by OhioMHAS
- Ohio Primary Care Workforce Initiative (OPCWI) level funding (\$5.4M over biennium)
- Maintaining existing Medicaid coverage and services

- Maintaining Student Wellness and Success Funding and the requirement that 50% of the funds are designated for mental health and physical health care services.

We appreciate the Senate’s leadership and support of these key provisions and respectfully request they remain in Substitute HB 33. Our state association, the Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC) has submitted written testimony detailing these provisions. I am happy to answer any questions regarding them but, in the spirit of time will focus my testimony on requests on behalf of PrimaryOne Health and the 57 FQHCs across Ohio – the largest primary care system in the state.

Support infant and maternal vitality and coverage

PrimaryOne Health supports initiatives and resources to promote maternal and infant health before, during, and after pregnancy. As you are probably aware, this is an area I spent a lot of time and commitment on while serving in this important body. PrimaryOne Health provides comprehensive services for pregnant women, mothers and babies. We have expanded our CenteringPregnancy Program to serve more women and families to include Spanish and soon Somali specific classes for our patients. We are anxious to combine this program, our Healthy Families America home visiting program along with doula services to improve our infant and maternal mortality and morbidity rated. The doula services will assist us in meeting the needs of women who may need an advocate to help her with advocating for her health, providing additional resources to support her social drivers of health and information about other services available to ensure a healthy pregnancy.

Hand in hand with these vital initiatives is coverage. We applaud the Governor for including coverage **for new and expectant mothers and children up to 300% FPL and the House for including continuous Medicaid eligibility for children ages 0-3years.** We firmly believe that partnering innovative interventions with healthcare coverage will increase Ohio’s success against

its abysmal infant and maternal death rates particularly among women and families of color. **We respectfully request the Senate restore these key provisions.**

Investment in Student Wellness and Success and School-Based Care

In Ohio, more than half of the School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) are operated by an FQHC and emphasize prevention, early intervention, and investments for health care in our schools. The specific services provided by school-based health centers vary based on the individual community needs and resources as determined by collaborations between the community, the school district, and health care provider(s)¹.

PrimaryOne Health is excited to share that we will be opening two new School-Based Health Centers this summer, one with Groveport Madison School District and one with Columbus City Schools. Each of these SBHCs will be available to serve the children, faculty and staff of the district, as well as the neighborhood residents. These are healthcare centers in schools providing BH, health, vision and dental services.

SBHCs play a critical role in improving children’s access to healthcare and closing gaps in health and education outcomes. Students who are sick or who have unaddressed health conditions such as dental or vision issues often cannot focus inside the classroom, fall behind and are more likely to miss school altogether. Healthy students learn better and in turn, are better equipped to reach their full potential. **PrimaryOne Health commends the House for including \$15M funding for school-based health care via the Department of Health and respectfully asks the Senate to restore this funding to expand existing and support new SBHCs.**

Summary

¹ <https://www.hrsa.gov/our-stories/school-health-centers/index.html>



Our mission is to provide access to services that improve the health status of families — including people experiencing financial, social, or cultural barriers to health care.

As Ohio continues its path to success, there remains an increased demand for quality, comprehensive primary care and the workforce to deliver more cost-effective and accessible care for all Ohioans. FQHCs are uniquely positioned to provide this care. On behalf of PrimaryOne Health I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and I am happy to answer any questions.