



**Senate Health Committee
Testimony on Substitute House Bill 33
May 10, 2023**

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity for to provide testimony on Substitute House Bill 33, state operating budget. My name is Gina McFarlane-El and I am the CEO of Five Rivers Health Centers. We are a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), serving over 27,000 patients with over 90,000 visits in Montgomery and Greene Counties for almost 12 years and 9 locations which includes 2 School-Based Health Centers. Like most Health Centers, we are our one-stop shop for our patients in the we provide medical, dental, Ob/Gyn, mental health, substance abuse, vision, psychiatry, Centering pregnancy, dieticians, transportation, and acupuncture.

We commend Governor DeWine, his Administration, and the Ohio House of Representatives for the dedication to Ohio's health by prioritizing the well-being of Ohioans in the proposed FY 2024-2025 state operating budget.

As a FQHC we support the investments in continued access to quality, affordable health care for Ohioans, support for Ohio's healthcare workforce, particularly in under resourced areas and the investment in school-based health care included in Substitute House Bill 33. I am here today to discuss a few of these areas and to respectfully request the removal of a burdensome unnecessary regulation by Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services (OMHAS) for FQHCs.

Five Rivers Health Centers supports Medicaid provider rate increases for FQHCs to help address current healthcare workforce shortages. Recognizing the impact of COVID-19 and inflationary pressures on the healthcare workforce especially in under-resourced areas such as our organization serves, an increase in rates will support workforce and yield greater access to care for Medicaid recipients. For example, small health care organizations like our FQHCs are competing against local hospitals which are offering \$40,000 to \$50,000 sign-on bonuses. These rate increases help us to try and stay as competitive as we can within our respective markets.

HB 33 requires all mental health, alcohol, and addiction treatment services to be certified by OhioMHAS unless exempt under state law. FQHCs/FQHCLAs are highly regulated federally by the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HRSA holds the Health Center program to high quality, financial, administrative, and clinical standards with required annual data reporting, and 3 day onsite reviews. The proposed requirement in HB 33 would be a duplicative, burdensome regulation and a barrier to care that would result in some FQHCs stopping these vital treatments and mental health services.

As we understand it, this proposal is intended for out of state for profit entities who are coming into Ohio and performing what they perceive to be profitable services and then leaving, providing no continuity of care. We support ensuring patient safety and continuity of care, however, as currently proposed FQHCs are unintentionally being included in this requirement despite already being regulated. If FQHCs are required in another cumbersome certification process, many will stop providing these services and would decrease access for many parts of Ohio fighting the opioid/fentanyl crisis, or access to basic mental health care, which is in high demand, and impacts our ability to provide

integrated care for our patients. Over 17% of our patients use our BH services annually. We humbly request an exemption for FQHCs/LAs from the OMHAS certification.

During the height of pandemic in 2020, Five Rivers Health Centers open 2 School-Based Health Centers in the Dayton Public and Trotwood Madison School Districts and we were honored to have our own Senator Huffman present for both grand openings. In Ohio, more than half of the School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) are operated by an FQHC like us. Despite our many challenges, we continue to provide medical, dental, and vision services to the families of our communities. We support SBHC allocation to Department of Health \$15M over the next 2 years and include a separate allocation for \$30M of one-time ARPA funding to expand existing and support new SBHCs.

Closing

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for supporting Ohio's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and FQHC Look-Alikes. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.