



17 S High Street, Suite 799, Columbus, OH 43215
614-228-0747 | www.TheOhioCouncil.org
f t i @theohiocouncil

Teresa Lampl, LISW-S
Senate Medicaid Committee
Testimony on HB 33 (SFY 2024-25 Operating Budget)
March 11, 2023

Chairman Romanchuk, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Amended Substitute House Bill 33. 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 treatment is fractured with overwhelming need for care and lacking sufficient 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 treatment services as well as recovery, social, and spiritual support 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 strengthen and expand access to behavioral health services for Ohioans in need. 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 for all Ohioans. 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 an additional \$143 Million (all funds) investment 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.

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 providers, Ohio's state 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:** Restore funding levels in support of ADAMH Boards 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.

Conclusion

The Ohio Council looks forward to working with the DeWine Administration and lawmakers during this budget process to advance sound policies, and direct resources to support 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. I am happy to answer any questions.