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Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 96  
House Children and Human Services Committee  
February 27, 2025

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only testimony in consideration of House Bill 96, the state operating budget. Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) is the state’s protection and advocacy system that advocates for people with disabilities in Ohio. Our work includes advocating for expanding access to community-based non-coercive mental health services and supports. This testimony will focus on the Department of Behavioral Health’s (BH) proposed budget.

DRO applauds Governor DeWine for his continued support of expanding access to Ohio’s mental health service system. In his press conference introducing the budget, the Governor stated: “this budget continues to expand our commitment to increase access to mental health services directly in our communities – building the system of care that was promised in the 1960s, but never fully built.” Ohio’s mental health service system has, over the last few decades, not been provided the resources to expand capacity in the community. This budget begins to shift the focus and invest in this necessary service system to ensure access to community-based services supports.

DRO would like to highlight four (4) provisions within Governor DeWine’s Department of Behavioral Health budget proposal:

- 1. Mobile crisis services for adults**
- 2. Mobile response stabilization services (MRSS)**
- 3. Establishing community-based comprehensive behavioral health clinic crisis centers;  
and**
- 4. Increasing the investment to 988.**

#### ADULT MOBILE CRISIS

Mobile crisis services assess individuals experiencing a crisis, de-escalate the situation, coordinate supportive services, and help provide peer recovery to individuals. As these services are expanded statewide in Ohio, it is critical the state continues to focus on connecting individuals to sustainable non-coercive community-based services. Expansion of these services are critically needed, and individuals intercepted by mobile crisis should also be connected to housing,

employment support, transportation, peer recovery supports, and treatments in their communities. The focus of these services should be on de-escalation, peer supports, and access to treatment in outpatient community settings. Expanding these services will help ensure individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis are connected to needed supports and being diverted from institutional settings.

#### MOBILE RESPONSE STABILIZATION SERVICES

Similarly to adult mobile crisis, MRSS provides crisis supports to people under 21 within 60 minutes of contact. These services meet these individuals in their homes and provide intensive services for up to 42 days. These individuals are then linked to on-going supports to ensure long-term services are provided. Expanding availability and access to these services in all 88 counties, especially 24/7, would ensure individuals under 21 are being connected to supports they need and not unnecessarily being placed in institutional settings.

#### COMMUNITY-BASED COMPREHENSIVE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINIC CRISIS CENTERS

Establishing CCBHC's is a step to ensuring access to mental health services and supports for Ohioans. CCBHC's can address individuals with multiple diagnoses and connect them to needed services, supports, and treatment. Specifically, CCBHC's focus on the population of individuals with higher level of care needs. These individuals have historically been placed in institutional settings segregated from their communities. By expanding access to services in the community for this population, Ohio is ensuring individuals can stay in their homes. Additionally, CCBHC's can connect individuals to care coordination, crisis supports and navigate the complexity of Ohio's mental health service system. Care coordination is a major gap in the continuum of care for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. This is a step forward in fulfilling the promise of building out a community-based mental health system.

#### INVESTMENTS IN 988

Finally, increasing funding to Ohio's 988 hotline ensures stability for crisis response in the state. Ohio's communities rely on responses that are at times coercive, traumatic, and do not connect individuals with the needed services and supports. By increasing funding and access to crisis services in this budget, Ohioans experiencing crisis can be supported in their homes and communities without the reliance on institutional settings.

The targeted investments in HB 96 have been needed to address the shortfall of community-based service capacity in Ohio's mental health system. However, as we continue to build these systems consideration should be made to ensure these services are noncoercive, center individual experiences, connect individuals with peer supports, and provide long-term sustainability in access to community-based services through care coordination.

The community mental health system in Ohio has not been adequately funded since the passage of the Mental Health Act of 1988, legislation that aimed at reducing the reliance on institutional

settings and investing in a community-based service system. However, since the implementation of this legislation, funding from the state has not met the need in Ohio communities. Currently, mental health services are being provided in jails, prisons, nursing homes, and state psychiatric hospitals. Meeting individuals in their communities, prior to entering institutional settings, is long overdue.

DRO applauds Governor DeWine for these needed investments. Ohioans experiencing a behavioral health crisis deserve dignity and access to services and supports in their communities. The state has promised to build this continuum of care for decades but has not followed through on that promise. This budget makes investments that provide a positive outlook for expanding the mental health service system. As the budget continues through the legislative process, DRO looks forward to working with the members of Ohio's General Assembly.

Thank you for the time and consideration of this written-only testimony on HB 96. If you have any questions or wish to discuss these issues further, do not hesitate to reach out to Jordan Ballinger, Policy Director at [jballinger@disabilityrightsohio.org](mailto:jballinger@disabilityrightsohio.org) or (614) 466-7264 x135.