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House Bill 96

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Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, Ranking Member Lett, and members of the House Children and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the State of Ohio Action for Resiliency Network, which is included in the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction's budget proposal.

My name is Luan Phan, MD, and I am the principal investigator of the State of Ohio Adversity and Resilience (SOAR) study. I am Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at The Ohio State University College of Medicine, the Jeffrey Schottenstein Endowed Chair of Psychiatry and Resilience, and the Chief of Psychiatry Services for Ohio State Wexner Medical Center.

We know that Ohio has seen an alarming rise in mental illness, suicide, and deaths related to overdose during the past decade, and these mental health challenges impact entire families and communities. Importantly, due to these challenges, Ohioans are not living to their fullest potential at work and at home.

Ohio is home to many passionate researchers, scientists and health care providers who've made it their life's work to improve — and save — the lives of people with mental health conditions. Now, these talented mental health experts from across the entire state are working as a team in this large-scale project to uncover the root causes of mental health conditions and to find 'actional' information that can reduce risk and build resilience in individuals, families and communities.

The SOAR study is a first-of-its-kind mental health research effort with government, academia and the private sector working together. The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center is the lead research site for the study, but we know it will take the bright minds of many to address the mental health crisis in our state and beyond. The richness of Ohio represents that of America and what we learn here can help all Americans and be a model for the nation.

The SOAR study is a true statewide effort, supported by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, with partners and impact across all 88 counties. In fact, over half of SOAR funding goes to activities outside of Columbus and Franklin County. There is a growing collaboration with Ohio's other public universities and health care institutions, which already includes: Bowling Green State University, Case Western Reserve University/ University Hospitals- Cleveland, Central State University, Kent State University, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Northeast Ohio Medical University, Ohio

University, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, University of Toledo, and Wright State University.

Additionally, we have directly met and connected with persons with lived experience, mental health and recovery advocates and organizations, mental health and addiction professionals and clinical organizations, educators, and schools, faith leaders and faith-based organizations, ADAMH boards, county coalitions, health departments, policy professionals, law enforcement and corrections organizations, business and corporate leaders, and more. The SOAR mobile medical unit has traveled to three communities in Ohio in Mansfield, Jackson and Boardman, with more locations planned for this year.

We've launched SOAR with two interrelated studies that run concurrently.

The Wellness Discovery Survey is a state-wide representative survey of Ohioans' mental health—including suicidality, substance use, persistent distress, as well as biopsychosocial factors that may underlie risk and resilience. We've exceeded our participation goal in just one year, and more than 15,000 Ohioans have taken part, including representation from all 88 counties and across demographic indicators.

The Brain Health Study will assess brain and body health mechanisms of risk and resilience by deploying cutting-edge deep phenotyping technologies. More than 1450 Ohioans have enrolled in the Brain Health Study which started this past summer, representing 930 distinct families.

The studies produced by SOAR will be multigenerational and help us identify the biological, psychological and social patterns of not only why and how some Ohioans struggle with mental health problems but also why and how others do not despite having the same adversities and challenges. The invaluable information we'll take from SOAR will allow us to find ways to protect people from persistent and harmful distress. It will also improve the lives of generations to come.

The next phase of SOAR will focus on sustaining the existing cohort of study participants. So many Ohioans have started this work with us, and so many want to continue. The longitudinal nature of SOAR is foundational to its vision and promise – we can only learn by following up on the more than 15,000 Ohioans who have already contributed their time and efforts into this project. Sustaining and building on the cohort will include repeat brain health assessments and follow-up wellness discovery surveys to track participants as their lives progress and their mental health changes, for the better or for the worse over time. The SOAR team will also further work to identify modifiable risk and resilience factors and track those changes.

Along with my written testimony, you also have a copy of the SOAR interim report, which was produced in October 2024. It outlines early and promising discoveries that will contribute to shaping mental health and resilience for the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I'm happy to answer any questions.