



## PROSECUTING ATTORNEY'S OFFICE SCIOTO COUNTY, OHIO

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136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
Community Revitalization Committee

### ***RE: Proponent Testimony, HB 58***

Chairman Click, Vice-Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer and Members of the House  
Community Revitalization Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of HB 58, the Recovery Housing Certificate of Need Program. By way of introduction, I am the Prosecuting Attorney for Scioto County, Ohio. Scioto County has a population of approximately 76,000. I was appointed and subsequently elected in 2018. My office handles all felony and juvenile prosecutions, children services cases, child support collections, delinquent tax foreclosures and all representation set out by statute. I have a staff of 28 hard-working individuals committed to making Scioto County a better place. The adult criminal division includes four full-time assistant prosecutors who in 2024 indicted 741 individuals. While that number may seem excessive for a county with a population of 76,000, please consider that Scioto County was ground zero for the opioid epidemic and its evolution throughout the years – from oxycodone and derivatives introduced by bad actors in the medical profession, through the resurgence of heroin, and ultimately fentanyl and its derivatives.

Contemporaneous with the opioid epidemic, was the growth and evolution and the understanding of addiction and the methods to treat addiction. In 1998, Scioto County went from a few small outfits that helped those in recovery through 12-step and other programs to a robust industry comprised of multiple companies and multiple methods to assist those in recovery. Through these various entities Scioto County has been a trailblazer in the recovery world. Through these entities and collaboration with the Courts, we have witnessed a “sea-change” in how addiction is addressed and attitudes towards our citizens in recovery. Prior to 2019, it was the norm to have over 1000 to 1500 indictments per year, many of which were lower level felony offenses. Today, our prosecutorial focus is on the traffickers that bring the death into Scioto County.

With the advancement in treatment options and the companies that have promulgated in Scioto County, we have also seen a much-needed evolution of housing available to those in recovery. Recovery housing has been growing at an exponential rate to address the needs of the multitude of people seeking recovery in Scioto County. Scioto County has, not only some of

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the finest treatment providers in the State, but also some of the best recovery housing in the state.

However, with this substantial growth, there are some bad actors, both in treatment providers and recovery housing – those that are in it only to maximize profit at the expense of providing the client with all the tools and resources needed to advance recovery. Unfortunately, the promulgation of bad actors in treatment and recovery housing take the headlines more often than the good actors. These bad actors have alarmed their fellow neighbors, sapped the resources of first responders and law enforcement, discouraged business and potential economic development. By way of some examples, Deputy Chief Jason Hedrick shared with me some information from the Portsmouth Police Department. He and Chief Brewer run a police department full of excellent and compassionate officers who love their city and want its citizens to flourish. Below is an excerpt from a patrol officer's 2022 email to Dep. Chief Hedrick. While the email doesn't distinguish between treatment centers and recovery housing, the concern is sincere.

... I have worked in law enforcement in Scioto County for about 7 years.... I know I speak for several officers if not all officers at the Portsmouth Police Department when I say that I would love to see all people rehabilitated from drug addiction. We constantly deal with drug related issues on a daily basis and they often transfer over to more serious crimes such as robbery, burglary and felony theft. Drug addiction also hurts families and breaks up marriages. With that in mind, I want to express a few concerns with treatment centers in Portsmouth, Ohio. Number one, there are too many and it is detrimental to the community and people of Portsmouth. ... Officers see people relapsing on a daily basis, beating up their boyfriends, girlfriends, assaulting others, stealing from neighbors, because of drug addiction and ultimately residing in Portsmouth because of their relapse. After this, people are residing in vacant condemned structures, or living with another resident and ultimately selling drugs out of their home. The aftereffects of the above are terrible. ... a good tax base is great, but we should encourage people to run a business in Portsmouth for the right reasons.... It would be nice to have a reputation for something good. We all know that there are a lot of good people in our community...

With regard specifically to recovery housing, another patrol officer relates to his chief about his evening shift in Spring 2022.

"We responded to three of these drug treatment homes tonight reference to overdoses.... I'm not sure who is operating the ... address, but the resident advisor was not there, but obviously these treatment homes are not working."

Deputy Chief Hedrick, in an email to Chief Brewer following up on the above email related the following:

... The biggest areas of complaints that we get from city residents are about the group residential housing folks in treatment. The complaints are having a large number of clients living in a house. Complaints about groups of people outside all hours of the nights, I believe this is because they go outside to smoke. This makes residents uneasy

having a large group of people outside at 3:00AM in residential neighborhoods. I understand that the model for residential living is to integrate these folks back into normal neighborhoods and to emulate normal residential life. However, having 6-8 former drug addicts living in the same house in a residential neighborhood in Portsmouth would generate concern for those other residents in that neighborhood. To me, these types of housing situations are more of a commercial establishment than a residential establishment. These houses tend to be for profit establishments that I believe should be more regulated as a commercial property than a residential. These houses tend to bring more police, fire, and EMS services into residential neighborhoods than a single-family residence. For example, just yesterday, during an 8 hour shift, the Police, Fire, and EMS were called to 3 of these type of residential houses for overdoses... These overdose calls, again, bring law enforcement, fire, and EMS into residential neighborhoods that don't generally see this type of activity. It makes sense that residents are concerned about having this type of activity in their neighborhoods. It is obvious that these types of housing do bring drugs into the area as evidenced by these 3 overdose calls...

Ultimately, the goal should be to keep the good actors and eliminate the bad actors. Since 2022, there has been progress through the good actors in recovery housing. Also, I would acknowledge the efforts by the 135<sup>th</sup> general assembly in the passing and codification of House Bill 33. Anecdotally, it is my belief that the situation has improved on the availability of good housing. However, the bad actors are still there. I have yet to see the State bring any action to eliminate some of these bad actors. Terrible events continue to happen in bad recovery housing as referenced by Representative Pizzulli in his testimony before committee.

That's why the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association and I are supportive of House Bill 58. It brings teeth to the local community through its local agencies to complete inspections and investigate complaints, putting in place the people of Scioto County, or any County, to police their own situation – those that are more “in the know” on the situation on the ground. Those that care about their particular community and to see it flourish with a reputation for something good. House Bill 58 also provides a fair mechanism to fund these local efforts and ensures that the locality can handle the needs and issues of this particular industry. More importantly, it helps to ensure that those in recovery are provided a safe and habitable space to continue their efforts towards a better life for themselves and their families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,



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