

I would like to thank Representative Pizzulli and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 58. This legislation, which is well overdue, will establish a certificate of need for recovery housing and will empower our local communities to enforce quality standards and it will protect both vulnerable individuals and the neighborhoods they call home.

As the Sheriff of Scioto County and a law enforcement officer with almost 36 years of service within Portsmouth and Scioto County I have witnessed firsthand opioids devastate my community. I was on a drug task force in the early 90's when the unfettered prescribing of pain medications reached its peak.

Through the years I have arrested and had interactions with many individuals that were under the influence of opioids as well as other drugs of addiction. During most of these arrests and interactions I spoke with the individuals to find out how their addiction began. I also spoke with them about the path to recovery. Every individual that I spoke with told me that they will not take that step until they wanted to. Many advised me that they know how to play the game with the court, telling the court that they want help, that they want to quit, allowing them to go free and continue in their addiction. Many spoke of the need to get high being so great that it was all that they thought of.

I tell you this, not as a nexus to do away with recovering housing, but to inform you of the extreme difficulty of recovery and the need to have quality standards for recovering housing. I believe in second chances and in helping those who are truly desiring recovery. However, I do believe in accountability from the owners and management teams.

Recovery housing was meant to be part of the solution. However, with the amount of monies available for recovery housing this attracts wrongdoers. Today, wrongdoers exploit recovery housing for profit, failing those in need and burdening our communities with unchecked, unregulated facilities.

On February 13<sup>th</sup> of this year I obtained a report from our locale ADAMHS Board which listed the Recovery Housing Residences in Scioto County. Their list contained 77 facilities for Scioto County, with a total of 871 beds between them. This list only contained the recovery housing in which a company added themselves to the list that OhioMHAS maintains.

The US Census lists the population of Scioto County at 71,969 (July 2023), yet we have at least 77 recovery houses. As stated before, the 77 recovery houses listed were only those on the OhioMHAS listing. These 77 recovery houses do not treat only Scioto County residents, they are here to treat residents throughout Ohio as well as other locations.

This crisis is not just about healthcare—it's a public safety issue, an economic strain, and a direct threat to the quality of life for the residents of Scioto County. As the Sheriff I have concerns for our residents.

Judges from across our state are sending individuals here through court orders. When these placements fail, those individuals are left stranded—they become homeless, re-offend, or face even graver consequences. Our townships, already struggling economically, are now dealing with the homeless of out of county individuals as well the numerous complaints from their residents about the increase in crimes that these individuals are involved in.

From January 1, 2022 to the beginning of February 2025 there were 456 calls of service to 8 recovery service providers that we have listed in Scioto County. This is not an all-inclusive list of calls for service, this is only the list of calls for service that were logged under the service provider's name. There are many more complaints that will be listed under a complainant's name or address, as well as our businesses that call in complaints. We are not able to capture these numbers due to the search parameter limitations.

While attending township meetings I have heard numerous complaints from the trustees, residents and business owners of criminal activity being committed by individuals who walk away from the recovery houses.

Township ambulances are struggling trying to keep up with a surge in calls for service that deal with individuals sent here on court orders. Most of these calls turn out to be non-emergency calls and this action removes the ambulance from service for actual emergency calls. I have personally assisted on a call in which we needed an ambulance and there were no ambulances available in our entire county. This is unacceptable.

The key measures outlined in House Bill 58 are common-sense measures. These measures will ensure that recovery homes are distributed fairly throughout the state, so no community is overwhelmed while others remain underserved by Establishing a Certificate of Need.

The bill will also grant local Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) boards the authority to inspect

facilities, investigate complaints, and shut down wrongdoers, by Empowering Local Oversight.

As I stated earlier, recovery is difficult and these common-sense measures will help in the recovery process. The measures will help ensure that communities are not taken advantage of by wrongdoers, who establish recovery housing that only serves as a front for fraud and criminal activity.

I have witnessed firsthand the damage caused by those taking advantage of people suffering from addiction. These malefactors established many pill mills in Scioto County, raking in millions until measures were finally established. All too late as we deal with the aftermath.

Once again, we have created an environment for wrongdoers to make millions of dollars. House Bill 58 is needed to help stop those wrongdoers and to help those in need of recovery and the surround community. I urge you to support House Bill 58—a measure that will protect our citizens, safeguard our communities, and ensure that every dollar, including Medicaid dollars, is spent wisely. Thank you for your consideration.