



Ohio House Community Revitalization Committee

HB 58 – Proponent Testimony

March 18, 2025

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

My name is Mircea Handru. I am the Executive Director of the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Seneca, Ottawa, Sandusky and Wyandot Counties. I have been the Executive Director for the past 10 years, working on various local behavioral health programs and services at the local level. Throughout the past 10 years, I have worked closely with many state legislators to implement changes to the local behavioral health system. For example, in Seneca County, we implemented the first multi-jurisdictional drug recovery docket in Ohio, which was not allowed without legislative action. Four years ago, our board district expanded from a three-county district board to a four-county district board. This unique expansion needed legislative action as Ohio law didn't have regulations in place pertaining to expanding a board district. In all my work, I realized the importance of working for the benefit of the local community; the importance of working closely with local stakeholders and elected officials; and ensuring that local needs and priorities are heard by our state legislators. In my discussions with various state agencies or legislators, I always mention that I work for the interest of my local district and not for the interests of a state agency or a state association. This is true regarding this written testimony.

HB 58 is targeting changes specific to recovery house services in Ohio. The current recovery housing process in Ohio needs restructuring. The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (Ohio MHAS) contracts with Ohio Recovery Housing (ORH) to implement practices for various levels of recovery housing services in Ohio and to certify recovery homes. The current process has created another level of bureaucracy that is unnecessary at the cost of Ohio's taxpayers. Ohio MHAS certifies all other behavioral health services in Ohio, including mental health housing services. The only exception is recovery housing services. I do agree that agencies seeking to be certified by Ohio MHAS must have a national accreditation. In this case it will be National Alliance for Recovery Residences and ORH as their Ohio affiliate. However, I don't see the benefit of additional public funds being provided to ORH. Many recovery homes can be certified by a different body, but public funds in Ohio are flowing through ORH. These funds should instead be directed at local ADAMHS boards to have the necessary resources to monitor all local recovery homes and not just the ones certified through ORH. Local ADAMHS boards are also the bodies to most likely know first when a new recovery home opens in the local community. HB 58 provides more authority to the local level, which I strongly support.

There are many uncertified recovery homes in Ohio. Currently, there is a lack of knowledge at the state level to identify these homes. In order to ensure appropriate services in Ohio's communities, we need to provide the oversight authority at the local level. As a board director, I welcome additional work and responsibility, but I also ask for authority. HB 58 gives more authority where it belongs- at the local level. Establishing a Certificate of Need by the local ADAMHS boards is necessary. Local ADAMHS boards know their communities best and their local needs. ADAMHS boards are statutorily responsible and required to "evaluate the need for facility services, addiction services, mental health services, and recovery supports." (ORC 340.03).

ADAMHS boards should also have the authority to inspect these facilities and investigate complaints. There isn't a body more vested to ensure quality services and compliance than the local ADAMHS boards. We work and live in the local community and receive support from the community in local property taxes. Local ADAMHS boards have a reputation that is of the utmost importance. We need to work with local community stakeholders for the best interests of our residents. When there is an issue at any of these homes or facilities, local stakeholders call one entity: the local ADAMHS board. Chair Click and Member Swearingen: you both represent my board district. Please call any local sheriff or judge in your district and discuss concerns about recovery housing services. Ask the sheriff or the judge to point you to the right entity to discuss your concerns and you will soon realize that our ADAMHS board is mentioned as the right entity to discuss and share your concerns. Therefore, local ADAMHS boards need to be empowered with the responsibility and authority to monitor these facilities.

I support HB 58 and thank both Representative Pizzulli and Representative Jarrells for their efforts to control and set expectations for the recovery housing system in Ohio. I am further planning to engage in discussions with both Representative Pizzulli and Jarrells for possible amendments to HB 58. Thank you for allowing me to submit my written testimony. I am asking that you support HB 58. Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Handru". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mircea Handru, MBA
Executive Director

1200 N State Route 53
Tiffin, Ohio 44883
(419) 448-0640