

Chair Click, Vice Chair Mullins, Ranking Member Brewer and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 58. This legislation provides a much needed framework for opening and operating recovery housing through a certificate of need process and ensures local communities can enforce and feel confident that quality standards are maintained in providing much needed care to some of our most vulnerable population.

My name is Scottie Powell, and I am the Chairman of the Board for the Scioto County Commissioners. When I joined the commissioner's board in January 2021, the number one question I received then was "What are you going to do about all of these recovery houses?" As I stand here today, this is still the number one question I am presented with by members of our community.

For some background, Scioto County and our county seat, Portsmouth, Ohio is often used as the poster child for the Opioid Epidemic. Which makes it fitting that Representative Pizzulli is one of the sponsors of this bill and I appreciate his work on getting it before this committee. Our community was one of the first hit with the illegal pill mills. There have been books written about Portsmouth, national news segments aired, and many national articles written about how opioids ravished my hometown. I am pleased to say those darker days are behind us, and our community is seeing a revitalization with historic investments in community and economic development.

With that said, Scioto County is the benchmark for how an unregulated recovery industry can continue to place strains on public safety, the housing crisis, and homelessness. We were the first to experience the pill mills, and by default we are ahead of the curve for the rest of the state in how recovery should and should not look. I could share many local stories of how this unregulated industry has negatively impacted our neighbors, communities, and even the very people they are set up to serve, but I want to spend my time on a different side of this discussion since Representative Pizzulli did a great job of sharing those stories during his testimony.

At the local level we have attempted to find ways to mitigate some of the risks associated with recovery housing. During a public hearing regarding possible zoning in Portsmouth, one statement hit me like a ton of bricks. On one side of the discussion were the community members concerned for their safety, property, neighbors and neighborhood, and on the recovery side of the discussion the statement I heard that hit home for me was, "We are healthcare, you wouldn't treat any other segment of healthcare this way." This was profound for me. You see, the most public part of my life is that of a County Commissioner, but my career is that of a Healthcare Executive. I have been a Licensed Nursing Home Administrator for close to 15 years, I have had oversight of Assisted Living Communities,

Nursing Homes, Home Health and Hospice. I'm currently the Director of Operations for a Hospice Organization for roughly half the State of Ohio.

The problem with the statement "We are Healthcare, you wouldn't treat any other segment of healthcare this way" is that it was true, but not in the way the speaker meant it. We have been treating recovery different from other segments. There was no registrations process, no real inspection process, and no real way to ensure minimum standards of care were being maintained. Even if they weren't maintained what was the penalty? To be clear, I am not anti-recovery. In fact, we have arguably some of the best operators in the region if not in the state right in Scioto County. What I am against are low standards, low quality, and a vulnerable population being taken advantage of. In my opinion, the recovery industry is still in the infancy stage of development and oversight compared to the other segments of the healthcare industry. A perfect example of this is the fact that just last year legislation was passed to require these entities to register their recovery houses, prior to this step we had no real understanding of how many recovery homes were in my county. Today, we now know that number is 80 for a population of roughly 70,000 people. This amount of recovery houses is on par with counties that have a population of over 1 million.

While there may be some opponents of these measures, the changes are common sense regulations found in other segments of healthcare that are in place to protect our vulnerable population and better ensure that tax payor dollars are getting a better return for quality.

- Establishing a Certificate of Need is not much different than the current nursing home bed licenses. In the nursing home world, there are only a finite number of beds across the state, and rules are in place prior to opening a new facility or moving bed licenses into a new community. For recovery this measure will distribute services throughout the state, and individuals seeking services will not need to relocate hours away from their homes to receive this much needed care. In fact, I believe that there will be a rush in the industry to rapidly apply for NOEs and build out services in underserved areas. As the President of the Region 9 OneOhio Foundation board, I was surprised at how many counties have next to no recovery services available.
- Empowering Local Oversight: Providing the local ADAMHS boards the authority to inspect facilities, investigate complaints, and potentially close poor performers is a critical piece of this legislation. Community members, tax payors, and those receiving treatment have a right to know that quality standards and services are being maintained. I have spoken to several of the top performers in this space and they are in favor of this measure. They recognize that the operators that are only

focused on profiting off the vulnerable are the same bad actors that create the negative stigma that recovery services currently receive. It is common in the other areas of healthcare for annual inspections and a robust complaint process. It is time for the recovery industry to be treated like the rest of healthcare.

I recognize there are likely some in this room that believe the current regulations are enough, we just need more time to see them implemented. However, the first round of regulations was just the first step to getting recovery housing on par with other sectors of healthcare. First, you set forth the requirement to register. That act gave us a baseline to know who was operating in the market. By supporting House Bill 58, you are taking the second step to ensure a minimum standard of care and quality in recovery houses. You are voting for quality standards to be maintained and experienced by those struggling with addiction. You are empowering our local experts to investigate community and consumer concerns and weed out bad actors dragging down the reputation of this industry. Finally, you are helping protect communities and provide a peace of mind that our tax payor dollars are being wisely spent on operators that truly have a heart for those in recovery by providing the highest standard of care.

I encourage each of you to support House Bill 58. I appreciate the efforts of the bill sponsors Representative Pizzulli and Representative Jarrells in crafting this legislation. Thank you all for your time today and I welcome any questions you have.