



Ohio Senate Addiction & Community Revitalization Committee

Proponent Testimony on SB 138

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Chairman Landis, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate Addiction & Community Revitalization Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 138. My name is Scott Sylak. I am the Executive Director of the Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County and President of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities.

As President of our state association, I would like you to know that our membership supports the changes to ORC 340 included in SB 138. We worked closely with Senator Johnson on SB 105 and took seriously this Committee's challenge to find compromise. SB 138 is the culmination of that hard work, and we believe passing this legislation as written is in the best interest of the clients, families, and the communities we serve.

Universally, Ohio residents should be able to access quality cost-effective crisis, treatment and support services, including recovery housing. We know communities throughout Ohio are experiencing increased demand for behavioral health services across all age groups. We also know that the demand for services is occurring at a time when suicide and overdose death rates remain at troubling levels.

Communities need more and better tools if we are to construct and maintain a system of care that is responsive to the needs of our entire community. Passing SB 138 as written will improve Board operations by clarifying elements of dispute or question. These items include clarifying how Boards may determine eligibility for services and supports; clarifying

complaint investigation procedures; clarifying Board responsibility for reviewing provider financial audits; clarifying Board ability to obtain a credit card; clarifying a Board's ability to educate the community and disseminate information regarding available resources and to provide referrals as appropriate; and finally, clarifying which cost elements Boards may review.

While those clarifications are most appreciated, the most substantive changes are those related to contracting and data. Current language relative to contracting processing and oversight activities including the use of Requests for Proposals, contract renewals, and early terminations have spawned multiple lawsuits or threats of lawsuits in the last few years. The proposed changes are mutually agreed upon and are likely to eliminate these sources of conflict.

Furthermore, we are living in the information age. Developing a data sharing and integration plan with OhioMHAS and other stakeholders is key to proper coordination of benefits and local planning, purchasing, evaluation, and monitoring of contracts.

In closing, I urge you to support SB 138 and help our communities meet local needs. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Should you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.