

Testimony of Daniel Lettenberger-Klein

CEO, Stella Maris

Before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee

RE: Medically Assisted Recovery Housing Funding Request

Chairman, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Daniel Lettenberger-Klein, and I serve as CEO of Stella Maris. Since 1948, Stella Maris has been a cornerstone of behavioral health and addiction recovery services in Northeast Ohio. What began as a refuge for men with alcohol dependency working Cleveland's riverfront has evolved into a regional leader offering a full continuum of care—including detox, residential treatment, outpatient services, peer support, workforce training, and recovery housing.

Our outcomes consistently exceed national averages:

- Detox success rate: 78% (vs. 32% nationally)
- Outpatient completion: 73% (vs. 42%)
- Multi-level care engagement: Over 84% of clients

These results reflect our long-term, community-rooted approach: reducing recidivism, improving employment, and changing lives.

The recent 2024 Cuyahoga County Community Needs Assessment revealed alarming trends:

- Fentanyl dominance
- Resurgence of heroin and methamphetamine
- Increasing synthetic drug use and multi-drug overdoses

More than 100,000 adults in our county are estimated to live with untreated substance use disorders. One of the most urgent gaps is recovery housing access—especially for individuals on Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). Within a 25-mile radius of Cleveland, only 32 certified homes for men exist, and only half allow MAT. None provide the full, wraparound services that Stella Maris offers.

To fill this critical gap, we propose launching:

Medically Assisted Recovery Housing—a 20–25 bed, Level 3 Ohio Recovery Housing-certified program housed in the St. Malachi Rectory, just steps from our main campus.

This program will serve 125 men annually—those with opioid use disorder who are high-risk and medically eligible for MAT. It will integrate:

- Peer-led recovery housing
- On-site clinical and medication management
- Trauma-informed counseling and case management
- Family education, peer mentorship, and job training via the Stella Maris Coffee Shop

With comprehensive support, clients will successfully transition into independent living, employment, and community recovery.

We respectfully request \$950,000 in the FY26–27 State Operating Budget to support two years of operations for this life-saving program.

Total Project Cost: \$2,798,213

Confirmed/Expected Funding:

- \$1,418,773 – Opiate Settlement II (secured)
- \$119,440 – State Opioid & Stimulant Response (secured)
- \$100,000 – Gerson Family Foundation (committed)
- \$150,000 – Thomas E. Gerson Philanthropic Fund (committed)
- \$60,000 – SNAP (anticipated)

With state support as the final funding piece, this innovative, scalable program can launch—and start saving lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Daniel Lettenberger-Klein

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