



Kerstin Sjoberg, President and CEO of Disability Rights Ohio  
Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 96  
Senate Health Committee  
May 13, 2025

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only interested party testimony in consideration of House Bill 96 (HB 96), the state operating budget. Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) is the state's protection and advocacy (p&a) system that advocates for people with disabilities in Ohio.

DRO would like to highlight two (2) provisions in the substitute version of HB 96 and one (1) amendment not included in this version of the bill:

- 1. Investments in 9-8-8 and Crisis Response; and**
- 2. Support Inclusion of amendment SC0906.**

#### INVESTMENTS IN 9-8-8 AND CRISIS RESPONSE

DRO applauds the House for funding the long-term sustainability of the 9-8-8 hotline through General Revenue Funding and maintaining investments in adult mobile response and mobile response stabilization services.

Mobile crisis services assess individuals experiencing a crisis, de-escalate the situation, coordinate supportive services, and help provide peer recovery to individuals. As these services are expanded statewide in Ohio, it is critical the state continues to focus on connecting individuals to sustainable non-coercive community-based services. Expansion of these services are critically needed, and individuals intercepted by mobile crisis should also be connected to housing, employment support, transportation, peer recovery supports, and treatments in their communities. The focus of these services should be on de-escalation, peer supports, and access to treatment in outpatient community settings. Expanding these services will help ensure individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis are connected to needed supports and being diverted from institutional settings.

Similarly to adult mobile crisis, MRSS provides crisis supports to people under 21 within 60 minutes of contact. These services meet these individuals in their homes and provide intensive services for up to 42 days. These individuals are then linked to on-going supports to ensure long-term services are provided. Expanding availability and access to these services in all 88 counties, especially 24/7, would ensure individuals under 21 are being connected to supports they need and not unnecessarily being placed in institutional settings.

INCLUDE AMENDMENT HC0688

**DRO supports SC0906, a proposed amendment that would create the “community projects” line item of \$4,716,000 that would be allocated for Community Response Pilot Programs** targeted in three different sized counties, municipalities, and/or townships. The goal of this pilot program would be to help divert crisis calls from 9-1-1, establish community response teams, and coordinate long-term care for individuals.

Currently, Ohio jails and law enforcement are overburdened with responding to calls that do not pose a threat to public safety. This drains these vital local resources. In many Ohio communities, law enforcement respond to calls including those in a behavioral health crisis, those experiencing dementia, and those experiencing homelessness. Like those who need emergency medical response, there are instances in communities where an alternative response is required to ensure the proper resources are being deployed.

For those experiencing a behavioral health crisis that could be a social worker, for an individual with dementia that could be a community health worker, and for those experiencing homelessness that could be a mobile response team. Governor DeWine’s proposed budget includes initiatives to reduce the burden on law enforcement and ensure proper response programs would be deployed. The Community Response Pilot Program would build upon these investments and support local communities to establish response systems that work best for their communities, populations, and needs.

Further, the Community Response Pilot Program provides new funding to communities that would not otherwise be available. This allows communities to create the response services needed while continuing to focus on public safety. The Community Response Pilot Program will allow communities to collaborate across criminal justice, human services, and housing agencies focusing on the needs of the individual and community. The data collected from the Community Response Pilot Program will allow for long-term expansion of the program and establishing statewide systems of response to better address the needs of Ohioans experiencing a crisis.

DRO appreciates your time and consideration of this written-only interested party testimony for Sub HB 96. If you have any questions or wish to discuss these issues further, do not hesitate to reach out to Jordan Ballinger, Policy Director at [jballinger@disabilityrightsohio.org](mailto:jballinger@disabilityrightsohio.org) or (614) 466-7264 x135.