



Ohio Senate Medicaid Committee

May 15, 2025

Talbert House Proponent Testimony on HB 96

Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 96. My name is Jodi Harding, and I am the Chief Operating Officer of Talbert House in Cincinnati. Talbert House is a large non-profit organization serving Hamilton, Warren, Clinton, and Brown counties. We employ 950 dedicated staff members and provide services to over 60,000 individuals each year through a comprehensive continuum of care. I am honored to be here today to voice our strong support for the OhioRISE program.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month—a time to reflect on the critical importance of mental health and to advocate for those most affected, particularly our youth. It is in this context that I urge your continued support for OhioRISE, a program that has proven essential in meeting the complex behavioral health needs of children across Ohio.

OhioRISE serves some of the most vulnerable young people in our state with significant behavioral health challenges. The program's approach is holistic and collaborative, engaging families and stakeholders to develop tailored care plans. The goal is clear: stabilize youth and help them remain safely in their homes. This not only reduces trauma caused by placement disruptions but also leads to substantial cost savings. To date, OhioRISE has supported more than 45,000 youth, many of whom would not have had access to this kind of support prior to this initiative.

The need for such services is urgent. In 2023, 20% of Ohio's middle schoolers and 33% of high schoolers reported poor mental health most or all of the time. The COVID-19 pandemic only deepened this crisis, dramatically increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal behaviors among adolescents. In Ohio, emergency department visits for mental health issues rose by 31% among children ages 5–11 and youth ages 12–17.

OhioRISE is part of the solution. Since its implementation, it has reduced emergency department visits by 41%, psychiatric hospital stays by 28%, and costly out-of-state placements by nearly 40%. These are not just statistics—they reflect real children staying out of crisis and closer to home.

The success of OhioRISE lies in its structure. Local Care Management Entities (CMEs)—longstanding, trusted providers in their communities—are at the heart of the program. They are uniquely equipped to deliver intensive home- and community-based services, which are essential to keeping families together and children in supportive environments. Services such as respite care for caregivers, intensive home-based treatment, mobile crisis response, and access to Flex Funds ensure comprehensive, flexible support tailored to each family's needs.



In conclusion, OhioRISE is not just a program—it is a lifeline for thousands of Ohio families. Continued investment in this initiative is vital. As we observe Mental Health Awareness Month, let us reaffirm our commitment to the well-being of Ohio’s youth. By supporting OhioRISE, we invest in healthier futures, stronger families, and more resilient communities.

Chair Romanchuk, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Senate Medicaid Committee thank your dedication to Ohio’s children and families. I welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Jodi Harding
Chief Operating Officer
Talbert House