



Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Committee

March 25, 2015

Interested Party Testimony on HB 64

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Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Driehaus, and members of the Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer interested party testimony on HB 64.

Formed in 1973, the Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies (OACCA) is a statewide association of child and family service providers that are united together to develop the best care possible for Ohio's children and families. Our member agencies serve the thousands of Ohio children and families involved in the child welfare, behavioral health, and juvenile justice systems. These services include foster care and adoption, behavioral health care, residential treatment and group home care, independent living, and specialized school services.

Most of our member agencies are certified community behavioral health organizations through the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. We support the proposed MHAS budget and policy initiatives, particularly the support of early childhood mental health consultation programs and the Strong Families, Safe Communities program.

Most of our member agencies are also Medicaid providers of behavioral health services to children and young adults. We appreciate the attention the Governor's administration has provided to innovating and modernizing this Medicaid health care program. We support the overall direction and vision of the Administration to further reform and invest in Ohio's behavioral health treatment and support services. Reconstructing twenty years of programs and processes will require measured planning.

Last month, the Governor's Office of Health Transformation released a white paper titled "Modernize Medicaid Benefits" that includes a vision of expanding the menu of behavioral health Medicaid services and integrating the program into managed care. As these transformation activities will trigger the most significant change for Ohio behavioral health providers and consumers in decades, the General Assembly must ensure there is adequate oversight and accountability for implementation of the reforms.

Together with multiple behavioral health and community stakeholder groups, we are working with the Administration and General Assembly to propose safeguards on the implementation of the reforms. Some of the safeguards may require amendments in HB 64 to clarify and enact a number of measures, including:

1. clarity of the Medicaid "budget neutral" resource investment in behavioral health services, and
2. reasonable implementation timelines for service coding alignment, expanded service array design and implementation, and transition to a model of managed care.

The Administration's vision for behavioral health, combined with the safeguards described above, will provide the best opportunity to achieve success. Our communities, their providers, and the children and families they serve, are counting on the State of Ohio to design and implement this behavioral health system transformation successfully.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 64. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the email or phone number provided above.

Sincerely,



Mark Mecum
Executive Director
OACCA