



***Ohio House Health and Aging Committee***

***HB 248***

***Testimony of***

***Liz Henrich, Associate CEO, OACBHA***

***April 27, 2016***

Chairwoman Gonzales, Vice Chair Huffman, and members of the House Health and Aging Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on House Bill 248. My name is Liz Henrich and I am the Associate CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities. On behalf of our member Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Boards, I am pleased to offer our support for HB 248.

Ohio is facing an opiate epidemic unlike anything we've seen before and we must all come together to fight this battle on all fronts. This legislation, that will help to ensure access to abuse deterrent opioid analgesic drugs, puts another tool in the tool-box for physicians, other healthcare providers, and communities who witness the impact of substance abuse and addiction in their practices and in their neighborhoods every day. By making abuse deterrent formulations of these pain medications more available and accessible, we do a better job of ensuring that these highly addictive medications are used only for their FDA indication for the treatment of pain. These abuse deterrent formulations are less appealing to individuals who are simply seeking their next high.

As our local Boards are transitioning their communities to become Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care, we need all the help we can get to limit access to pain pills that can be diverted, misused, and abused. We also need to help individuals understand the risks of abuse and addiction related to many pain medications and the need to safely store medications away from children. It is critical that we continue to support and encourage the prevention efforts that are underway throughout the state to educate individuals, families, and communities about substance abuse and addiction, particularly in relation to opiates and their impact on youth in Ohio today.

The opiate epidemic has had a tremendous impact on access to treatment and recovery services throughout Ohio. As more people are impacted by this addiction, access to treatment continues to be a challenge in many communities. As we strive to help all individuals understand that treatment works and people recover and we celebrate recovery in Ohio, we also must do everything we can to stem the tide of this epidemic in our state.

Ensuring access to abuse deterrent formulations that are harder to crush or melt or contain reversal agents that are activated when the pills are tampered with, will help physicians when they are faced with difficult decisions about treating chronic pain and will help individuals and families when they are concerned about the potential for abuse of the medications in their homes.

This is also personal issue for me. Before she passed away, my grandmother had a history of addiction to pain pills. She was in active addiction when she died. If there had been greater access to abuse-deterrent opioid analgesic drugs when she was being treated for chronic pain, her story may have been different. I want to ensure that families throughout Ohio who are in similar situations have appropriate access to opioid analgesics with abuse-deterrent properties.

Efforts like this bill will help us prevent future generations of Ohioans from being trapped in the clutches of opiate addiction. We applaud the members of this General Assembly for their commitment to ending this epidemic in Ohio.

Thank you for you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.