



House Bill 328

Ohio House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee

Prevention Action Alliance

October 21, 2021

Good morning, Chairwoman Carruthers, Vice-Chair Pavliga, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 328, a bill to establish a Governor's Office of Drug Policy. My name is Fran Gerbig and I am the Executive Director of Prevention Action Alliance (PAA). PAA is a statewide nonprofit prevention agency based in Columbus, Ohio and has been in existence for over thirty years. Prevention Action Alliance is dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. Our organization offers a wealth of resources, training services, grants and advocacy opportunities for those who are active in the prevention and mental health fields.

I have worked in the prevention field for over 20 years and during that time I have witnessed many changes. As administrations come and go and new issues come to the forefront, those in the behavioral health field have done all they can to care for and protect Ohioans. I am fortunate to be working during a time in which the state increasingly understands that what we do and its importance as we continue to see this understanding materialize into impactful pieces of legislation.

House bill 328 is one of those impactful pieces of legislation. By providing a system to incorporate the latest research and evidence into the continuum of care for the prevention and treatment of substance misuse and addiction, Ohio's behavioral healthcare sector will be strengthened, creating better outcomes for all of Ohio's families and ultimately supporting a stronger and healthier Ohio.

There are many promising aspects within this bill that Prevention Action Alliance support.

The coordination of quarterly reports and stakeholder meetings will bolster the state's infrastructure; With the tracking of the progress and success of our drug related efforts, we will be able to highlight emerging needs, share best practices and increase the knowledge and understanding of this important work among public officials and behavioral healthcare professionals.

The creation of a hotline and resource database will allow the public to easily access information, reduce barriers to access and increase knowledge about resources and programs throughout the state to help with addiction treatment

and prevention. Lastly, the office's ability to research and build partnerships will keep our state at the forefront of national policy changes, best practices and program sustainability.

The Office of Drug Policy will be an invaluable step in the building of a network of efforts currently taking place all throughout the great state of Ohio. This is something that we in the prevention field have been wanting for quite some time. The efforts of the Governor and the General Assembly in this space has been exceptional and we would like to see these efforts remain strong for many years to come.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 328. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.