

Written Testimony on the FYs 2022 and 2023 Operating Budget  
House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee  
February 16, 2021

Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West, and members of the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on Governor DeWine's proposed operating budget for fiscal years 2022 and 2023. OARP supports the budget for the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professional Board.

I am Thomas Stuber, President of the Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers (OARP), an organization of 40 of the largest Addiction Treatment and Prevention Agencies throughout Ohio. I am also President of The LCADA Way, the largest Behavioral Health Agency specializing in Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Prevention in Lorain, Medina, and Erie Counties.

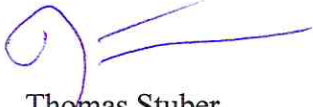
As I'm sure you know, the opioid epidemic continues to ravage our state and it is only compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. Overdose deaths in Ohio have surged. By November of last year, we surpassed the number of overdoses that we experienced in 2017, the worst year of the opioid epidemic. The current rate of overdoses in Ohio will see a 20% increase in 2021. To make matters worse, there is currently is not a sufficient behavioral health workforce to address the demand for treatment.

The Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board provides licensing and certification to those seeking to work in alcohol and drug treatment and prevention services. The board ensures high standards of treatment and prevention by assuring a competent, well-trained, and ethical workforce is in place. The Board currently regulates over 12,000 chemical dependency professionals who work with those who have substance use disorders or provide behavioral health prevention services. It endorses individual continuing education training courses and awards educational provider status designations. The Board also provides colleges and universities the opportunity to apply for curriculum endorsements to ensure students receive the chemical dependency education requirements for board certificates or licenses.

The Governor's proposed budget allocates \$833,131 in fiscal year 2022 (a 25.4% increase from FY21) and \$850,305 in fiscal year 2023 (a 2.1% increase from FY22). The recommended funding for the Board would support expanded access to behavioral health services and the early intervention for at-risk youth initiatives. I cannot stress enough how both of these programs point to the need for high-quality chemical dependency professionals. Additionally, this budget would allow the Board to hire a full-time position for certification examination and processing, and the position could assist with conducting investigations. The Board could also improve the eLicensing system which would shorten certification processing time and automatically provide information that suggests the path to the next level of certification once a prevention certificate is awarded. This was a recommendation from stakeholders such as OARP and is expected to increase the pool of professionals with the necessary certifications for working in schools.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and if you have additional questions regarding this testimony, I can be reached at 440-669-0723.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'T' followed by a horizontal line that tapers to the right.

Thomas Stuber  
President, Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers