

Chairman Dolan, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on HB 110 in relation to Mental Health and Addiction Services. My name is Matt Old, and I am an Erie County Commissioner.

Earlier this year I began working with Senator Gavarone and Representative Swearingen on an amendment to allow County Commissioners to have more input into the function of local Mental Health and Addiction Boards. As elected officials, we are accountable to our constituents. The Mental Health and Recovery Boards are currently constituted of 18, or in some cases 14, members. For an 18 person board, current state law provides that 10 of the appointees are appointed by Boards of County Commissioners and 8 are appointed by the Director of State Mental Health and Addiction Services.

An amendment in HB 110 changes that division of appointees to 80% appointed by the County Commissioners and 20% appointed by the director. It also allows for Commissioners to decrease the size of the Board to anywhere from 5-9 members. It must be noted that this provision is totally permissive. "If you like your board, you can keep it."

The House passed bill also requires any newly formed boards to be made up of 5-9 members and eliminates the 6 state mandated positions.

We worked with Senator Gavarone, Rep. Swearingen, CCAO, OACBHA, and others to improve on the House-passed language. Senator Gavarone has drafted an improved amendment. It permits newly created Boards to have 7-9, 14, or 18 members. It mandates that the State or the County Commissioners appoint at least one person who either directly, or has a family member who, is receiving or has received mental health services, and one person who, either directly or has a family member who, is receiving or has received addiction services. That reinstates two of the mandated state positions. Finally, the amendment specifies the exact ratio of state appointments and county commissioner appointments depending on the size of the board.

It is also important to note that current law requires half the board be made up of people with an interest in addiction and half be made up of members with an interest in mental health. This provides an assurance that board members are interested and involved in the arena of mental health and addiction.

Senators, we have 88 counties in Ohio and 88 different ways of doing business. Mental health, addiction, and recovery are too important of issues to fit into a one size fits all system. These Boards are too important to the health and welfare of the state to not ensure accountability to the citizens of our state and their local elected representatives. This amendment is largely permissive and preserves the function of these boards. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for communities who are struggling to reform their board. Thank you for your time.