



Thomas Stuber, LPCC-S, LICDC-CS
Testimony on Am. Sub. HB 110
Senate Finance Committee
May 13, 2021

Thank You Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Am. Sub. House Bill 110, the biennial budget bill for state fiscal years 2022-2023.

I am Thomas Stuber and I present today as the President of the Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers (OARP), an organization of 40 of the largest addiction treatment and prevention agencies throughout Ohio. OARP strongly endorses this legislation and the strategic objectives outlined in Director Criss's and Director Corcoran's budget proposals. 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 and I want to speak about the impact on providers. I would like to focus on three key issues for your consideration as you act on this legislation.

1. ADAMH Board amendments: The proposed amendments submitted by the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities (OACHBA) will significantly impact provider agencies that currently contract to provide treatment and prevention services for local ADAMH Boards. These amendments will change the ADAMH Boards' role, contracting authority, and oversight authority over provider agencies. While we have worked collaboratively and effectively with our ADAMH Boards for the past three decades, to make these changes without the input of their partners, as well as the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, is not good practice. Anything with this level of change and resulting controversy warrants that it be addressed in its own legislation and not slipped in the budget bill. This would provide the opportunity for proponent and opponent testimony and the resulting opportunity for all parties to have input into the language. Accordingly, the Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers, along with a host of other provider organizations, request that you oppose the inclusion of any provisions or proposed amendments addressing county ADAMH Board duties, contracting, and oversight authority. Specifically, please oppose MHACD29 and any amendment that would modify the 120-notice requirement in R.C. section 340. Such

matters require further examination and participation by all partners in a setting other than the budget process.

2. Workforce Development: OARP accepts that one of our primary responsibilities is to ensure that the addiction treatment field has a sufficient and quality workforce. Well-trained professionals who possess the skillsets and experience required for us to deliver effective treatment are essential to those suffering with substance use disorders, especially those suffering opiate addiction. There is not currently a sufficient workforce to address the demand for treatment. Additional funds supporting Training and Tuition Reimbursement will make a difference. Currently all members of OARP have clinical staff openings, some as many as 60 clinical positions. The LCADA Way has 20 clinical positions currently open. It is important to note that each day that a clinical position remains open, as many as 12-20 individuals will not receive treatment. This is especially critical as we prepare to address the surge in demand for addiction treatment expected following the Covid-19 pandemic. The House directed \$2.5 million in Covid-19 funds in each year of the biennium to support the behavioral health workforce. We respectfully request the Senate support an additional appropriation to increase the OhioMHAS line item Community Innovation (336504) by \$2.5 million in each year to be directly distributed to OhioMHAS-certified behavioral health organizations to develop and sustain workforce-incentive initiatives and offer supervision support.

3. Student Wellness and Success Funds: Treatment is an important component in addressing the Opiate Epidemic. Over this past year we have seen a continued rise in overdose deaths in Ohio, and we are expecting that overdoses and overdose deaths will continue to increase by more than 20% this year. But treatment is only part of the answer, prevention is a critical part of the solution. If we do not equip our young people with the knowledge and skillsets before they are faced with the potentially life-altering decision regarding drug use, we will only be treading water. A recent survey by the Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Service Providers found that behavioral health providers are now reaching 73% of the schools in Ohio. The Ohio Department of Education's 2019-2020 Student Wellness and Success Survey found over 66% of schools implemented behavioral health initiatives with these funds; more than one-third of all initiatives were reported as being "new;" and nearly one-third were an expansion of services. The Student Wellness and Success Funds are making a difference. Accordingly, the Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers requests that the Student Wellness and Success Fund authorization language (R.C. 3317.26) and funding be restored to the Executive version of HB 110 (EDUCD83/EDUCD144).

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas D. Stuber
President, Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers