

Good morning Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the committee.

The Refuge is humbled to submit testimony in support of the amendment to the States Main Operating budget to support facility improvements for the Refuge. My name is Austin Hill and I am a Director in the Refuge and I believe and I know we have a life saving solution in a time of great need.

[Amendment is Located in the Dept of Mental Health, Continuum of Care Services, Section 337.40, starting in line 77409]

The Refuge is a Columbus-based addiction recovery organization. We are among only a handful of organizations in all of Ohio with residential addiction recovery programs that are more than one-year in length, and offered free-of-charge. We have been at this work for 21 years now, and in that time have assisted nearly 3000 men and women. The amendment under consideration would go towards expanding the residential capacity of The Refuge by approximately 50% from current levels. The Refuge serves around 300 men and women, after our expansion this number would grow to be closer to 500 annually. Based on our recent Impact and Value Report, that was developed by a professional and independent third-party evaluator, this investment stands to save the State of Ohio millions of dollars in taxpayer and community monies. (To be expanded upon in further comments)

[Measurement Resources in February 2021]

That empirical outcomes data, developed by a professional and independent third-party evaluator, defines the potential savings to the State and serves at placing The Refuge among the best addiction recovery organizations both in Ohio and nationally.

For every \$1 dollar of money invested in The Refuge, there is an estimated \$2.88 benefit to the community through reduced societal costs over the 3-year period the study based its findings on.

In real dollar terms, this equated to The Refuge having saved communities and taxpayers over \$2.5 million. This savings was realized by The Refuge eliminating the cost to society had our folks not reduced or ended their substance abuse by going through The Refuge.

We have a solution. Even more exciting and personal is the real life change experienced by the men and women in The Refuge.

Of the former addicts and alcoholics who came The Refuge, upon completing our 13-month residential program that, again, are offered free-of-charge:

- 66% reported being continuously clean & sober and free from the compulsion to drink or use drugs
- 92% reported working continuously in full-time jobs producing a living wage. *The average annual income for the 3-year period of the study was \$35,424*
- 86% reported living in safe & affordable housing
- 94% reported food security
- 87% reported having a reliable form of transportation
- 90% reported not having used emergency rooms or hospitals for drug or alcohol-related reasons
- 96% reported having had no involvement in the criminal justice system

Still further, **and what is most important to me and most deeply impactful to them;**

- 90% reported being more trusted and relied upon by their children and people who mattered most to them

We are a relationally focused, fiscally audited and time-tested organization. What's more, we offer and produce hope in a time of great need.

Thank you for your time and I would love to answer any and all of your questions. Thank you.