



## **Testimony in Support of Ohio Commission on Minority Health Budget**

May 6, 2021

Health Care Access Now, Cincinnati OH

Sarah Mills, MPA, CEO

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### **Good morning Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Minority Member Antonio, and esteemed members of the Senate Health Committee.**

As the Ohio Legislature wrestles with policy changes and budgetary decisions to improve the health of Ohioans, we support the Ohio Commission on Minority Health Funding and other funding to expand the potential impact of the Certified Pathways Community HUBs and Community Health Workers.

Since 2009, Health Care Access Now (HCAN) is a Certified Pathways Community HUB and has partnered with service providers, health systems, managed care plans, learning collaboratives, health and social justice coalitions, and community agencies to improve the health of our community. In this spirit of collaboration, we serve, learn, and improve together.

Two years ago, HCAN was privileged to provide testimony to the Senate Finance Committee. At that time there was a growing, but informal network of five Certified Pathways Community HUBs. HUB expansion was supported by the Ohio Commission on Minority Health, the Medicaid Managed Care Plans, and others who have leveraged their state budgets to enable HUBs to grow. Today there are ten HUBs across the state of Ohio and we have developed a more formal network to collaborate and support each other. The ripple effect of your support from two years ago is that these 10 HUBs operate a network of 65 agencies that employ 192 Community Health Workers to serve over 4,000 Ohioans! Each HUB is an independent and unique organization, reflecting the needs of its community. Our ability to work together, across the state, is because we share the Pathways Community HUB Model.

The Pathways Community HUB Model provides a structure flexible enough to meet individual and diverse needs, while at the same time providing a firm and rigorous process. This process maintains fidelity to the Pathway model and allows the outcomes to be evaluated. Each HUB has a network of care coordination agencies. These community agencies employ Community Health Workers (CHWs) who use this evidence based, peer reviewed model to build trusted relationships. Once they have established this relationship, they provide education, support, and connections to resources and health care services to the client in order to reduce risk factors. As described by the model creators Drs. Mark and Sarah Redding, "In the HUB model a



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comprehensive assessment of risk is completed and each medical, social or behavioral health risk is tied to a nationally standardized Pathway.” Payment is earned when a Pathway is completed successfully and an outcome is achieved. This is an important part of the model; ensuring that outcomes for clients, not just hours worked, are the foundation of the HUB.

Health Care Access Now (HCAN) is one of the three original HUBs in the state of Ohio. Our mission is to build partnerships that result in a better-connected primary care system for vulnerable patient populations who do not have consistent and affordable access to preventive, primary care and other social services. We achieve our goals by offering community-based care coordination services through our Adult Health Care Coordination and Maternal & Child Health Care Coordination Programs. We primarily serve either the uninsured or those enrolled with Medicaid health plans. As a HUB we provide accountability through reporting to funders and other stakeholders like the Ohio Commission on Minority Health on behalf of the agencies and community health workers within the network. With long standing support of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health we have continued to grow our impact in our community, including the last two years. Despite the pandemic we served 24% more clients HUB wide in 2020 than in 2019.

During this unprecedented time of a global pandemic HCAN is uniquely poised as a trusted member of the community to help address the health disparities in our service area. Part of this trust is built by reflecting the community we serve. More than 80% of our clients are African American, and more than 80% of the community health workers within our HUB are also African American.

HCAN’s network bridges the gap between clinical providers and the individual members of the community by applying the Pathways Community HUB Model. HCAN’s Pathway Programs center on pairing an individual with a CHW who serves as a non-clinical advocate to support the client in addressing barriers to care and stresses the importance of prenatal care, mental health care, maintaining health insurance, and having a medical home for all family members. An example of the impact of the Maternal & Child Health Care Coordination Program can be seen in birth outcomes for HCAN clients. Hamilton County rates for preterm and low birth weight are alarmingly high, especially for African American individuals. The preterm and low birth weight rates for HUB clients are consistently better than the county and state rates for African American singleton births. In 2019 91% of HUB African American births were full-term, while for Hamilton County overall this percentage was 86%. And at 89%, the percentage of African American HUB clients who gave birth to healthy birth weight babies in 2019 was three percentage points higher than for Hamilton County (Ohio Public Health Information Warehouse).

In addition to partnering with care coordination agencies and employing CHWs, HCAN is participating in local learning collaboratives, providing technical support to new HUBs, serving



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as a practicum site for Community Health Workers earning their certification, and providing a Certification Training Program.

With each client we serve we take a step toward realizing a better community for our neighbors, friends, and family. The continued financial support of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health and others will allow us to continue to expand this model and the positive impact in our community. We support:

- Increasing the budget of the Ohio Commission of Minority Health to allow existing HUBs to serve more counties in their service areas and start new HUBs in SE Ohio and other areas with health disparities not served by an existing HUB
- Requiring Medicaid to provide HUB services for all enrollees recommended by a licensed professional (adding adults and maternal enrollees, not just pregnant)
- Dedicating funds awarded to plans to pay for HUB outcomes and requiring plans to share cost savings/pay for performance incentives with HUBs
- Funding Community Health Worker training

Sarah Mills, MPA  
CEO

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Mills".

Dameta Wright, MSOL  
HUB Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dameta L. Wright".