

Thank you Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Senate Health Committee. My name is Tanikka Price and I am the Director of Education for the Central Ohio Pathways HUB. Our work at the HUB is a portion of the work done at the Healthcare Collaborative of Greater Columbus (HCGC) which is a 501c3 affiliate of the Columbus Medical Association. In 2019 HCGC invested money from its reserves and with generous support from the Columbus Medical Association, it was able to start the Central Ohio Pathways HUB which has a service area of Franklin, Delaware, Union, Madison, Pickaway, Licking, and Fairfield Counties. Our HUB just celebrated it's two year anniversary on March 1st and currently consists of ten care coordination agencies which employ over 45 Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Supervisors.

We have been incredibly grateful for the relationships with the Medicaid managed care plans and are very appreciative of the support of the Commission on Minority Health, whose funding has augmented our work to allow for the exponential growth of our HUB's services in Central Ohio. The impact of the HUB has been palpable for our most vulnerable families, hit hard by the COVID pandemic. Surviving this epidemic without the support of our caring and trusted CHWs would be unimaginable for these families. Along with significant efforts in reducing the infant mortality rate in Central Ohio, where in our first year of OCMH grant funding we saw 92% of the babies born to racial minority mothers in the OCMH cohort were born at a healthy birth weight, our HUB has been undertaking a variety of projects to show that this model is truly a system of care and is plug and play, regardless of population or need. While 40% of the people that we serve are pregnant women, the other 60% are women of child bearing age, adult men and women, and children.

We have done specialized programming and created relationships with groups like City Prosecutor Zach Klein's office where we are a year and a half into theft diversion program that allows for people to get assistance rather than jail time – seeing a 95% success rate of completion. We are working with Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) and Physicians CareConnection to ensure housing security and utility assistance, as well as addressing the service coordination needs of any of the 35,000 heads of household living in CMHA housing. We are also working with the dozens of partners in Central Ohio on the Center for Disease Control Data To Action grant to assist individuals who are in recovery to find stability in their new life. Since September 2020, 500 households have been referred to us to receive rental and/or utility assistance to family stability in these extraordinary times.

In addition to making sure we serve all of our neighbors that could benefit from our services, we take immense pride in the work our CHWs, and all of the HUB CHWs across Ohio have played during the COVID-19 crisis. Over the course of the pandemic, in Central Ohio alone we have provided over 900 COVID related education – anything from testing site information to how personal hygiene can play a key role in staying safe – to our clients. We have gotten pregnant women to their prenatal appointments when they had no support to get there. We have educated parents about the importance of their children getting immunizations, especially during a pandemic.

In our two years we have served over 2,600 of our neighbors as clients, and while we are incredibly grateful for the support of the managed care plans – not all of the plans cover all clients in this model, and we do not turn clients away based off of their insurer. If someone is in need of care management, our CHWs step in. We continue to make efforts to build our capacity in Central Ohio, knowing full well that there will never not be a need for this type of incredibly unique care management. We seek grants and other forms of funding to supplement the work our CHWs continue to do. These men and women put in countless hours to serve those in need and we are beyond fortunate to have them.

Two notes of change from our testimony in the House Finance Sub-Committee on Health and Human Services – first – we noticed an amendment of removing additional dollars from the Ohio Commission on Minority Health from HUBs that we would like to see reinstated, second – we have been working with several members of the legislature including Senator Romanchuk on an amendment that would clarify support of the model to fidelity, support community health worker certification training, and further financially support HUBs which would lead to sustainability and growth for more HUBs in Ohio. We ask for support of this amendment as well.

We remain grateful for the support of the Legislature, ODM, and OCMH in our efforts. We look forward to discussions on opportunities around risk-sharing in the managed care plan pay for performance withholds, as we believe, with proper financial support to grow and appropriate ability to outreach to clients, HUBs could be an unlocked treasure for truly impacting community wide health disparities.