



**Opposition Testimony on Senate Bill 216
Senate Judiciary Committee
February 8, 2022**

Thank You Chairman Manning, Vice Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to give testimony on this very important Senate Bill 216, Dylan's Law. I also want to acknowledge Senator Johnson for sponsoring this bill. We all believe in having a safety net for children, especially children in homes where someone is struggling with addiction.

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 believes that a safety net for children is critical, but we believe this bill is too prescriptive and will interfere with the advances we have made in the treatment of women and their children over the past ten years. Several members of OARP have been selected as pilot agencies for the implementation of the Maternal Opiate Medical Supports Project (MOMS) through the Ohio Departments of Medicaid and Mental Health and Addiction Services as well as the Office of Health Transformation. The MOMS project is a two-year quality improvement initiative that seeks to improve maternal and fetal health outcomes, improve family stability, and reduce costs of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) in Ohio's Medicaid program by providing treatment to pregnant mothers with opiate issues during and after pregnancy. The requirements of SB 216 will negate many of the requirements of this project.

I am also President a of The LCADA Way, the largest behavioral health agency specializing in substance use disorder treatment and prevention in Lorain, Medina, Erie counties and recently in Cuyahoga County. As a field, it

is our responsibility to ensure that those suffering from addiction receive treatment in a safe, drug-free setting with state of the art and research-based models of care.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, The LCADA Way began allowing women admitted to our residential treatment program, The Key, to bring their pre-school aged children to live with them while they received treatment. This included women who completed their pregnancy and then returned to treatment with their newborn. This change occurred in 2007 and has been a critically important part of our women's treatment program ever since. We enhanced our services to include nurturing and parenting programming and the buildout of our Nurturing Lab. This has proven essential to helping our customers/clients learn the skills to be an effective parent. As you are aware, this is a disease that is often multigenerational. This means that many grew up in homes in which one and sometimes both parents were addicted. As a consequence, they never had the opportunity to be nurtured themselves. Within the Key, they not only receive treatment for their addiction, they are also nurtured and begin to address the traumas they experienced growing up. With the assistance of a Child Development Specialist, they are taught and coached to nurture their child. Just becoming alcohol and drug-free and working a recovery program will not ensure that they will be good parents. These additional services are essential to help them become that parent. Since the inception of this model, more than eighty (80%) percent of the mothers admitted to this program have successfully completed residential treatment and transitioned to lower levels of ongoing care.

SB 216, while requiring the mother to receive necessary treatment, separates the mother and child at a time when the opportunity for maternal-infant bonding is at its highest. The mother and the child should not lose this opportunity.

We would be very interested in working with Senator Johnson to amend this bill so that the protections he seeks for the child are combined with the most effective treatment methods for both the mother and child.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to address this most critical issue and for your consideration of tools and methods that will impact mothers suffering from addiction and their children.

If you have additional questions regarding this testimony I can be reached at 440-669-0723.

Thank You.