

Good afternoon. Chairman Johnson, Gentlemen of the Ohio Addiction and Community Revitalization Committee. My name is Bryan Davis, current Scioto County Commissioner, church Pastor, and former business owner in Portsmouth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I hope my input will help you better understand the continued impact the current Opioid Epidemic is having on our Community. It is said in order to better one-self, one must face the reality of the situation they find themselves in. This is true, with the individual addict, but in a broader scope, a community as a whole.

As a County Commissioner, and also as a Pastor, I see and hear the impacts addiction is having on our community. I have sat in homes and emergency rooms with families who are left with only questions and very rarely answers as to what caused their love one to die. Our first responders are overwhelmed, demoralized, and frustrated at the rapid increase of opioid related squad runs due to the number of overdoses. I have sat in meetings and listened to the statements from life-long public servants who have served their communities without question, and now they are burned-out and re-thinking their commitment to their departments. Several have quit. Our operating budgets are stretched to the max. Funding for volunteer departments at the Township level is not sufficient and the rate of recruitment is falling far behind. Simply put, young adults are not volunteering like they used to. Even paid squads and fire departments are having trouble with recruitment.

Crime is on the rise and overdoses continue at an alarming pace. Many citizens, especially long-established business owners, are angry. Drug related assaults, break-ins, and crimes against women and children are on the rise in our county. Many crimes go unsolved. Our probation departments at the Common Pleas and Municipal Court levels are over-burdened with over 1300 individuals in Common Pleas Probation alone. This number out of a county of 75,000 people. Many individuals are unable to be properly supervised due to the large numbers of offenders. Our jail is overloaded

with not only our own offenders but those of surrounding counties who also have insufficient space in their facilities. Our law enforcement and judiciary budgets are ever increasing and the cost to the average tax payer keeps going up. We are now funding a special victim's unit to investigate crimes against the most vulnerable. Our Children's Services budget is now being supplemented by our General Fund as our numbers have reached 400 children in protective custody and our boarding costs have increased exponentially. Our case load in Juvenile Court is unsustainable and children getting to permanency is slowed due to the number of cases and burden on the courts. Continued trauma to children, and increased costs to the county are being felt by all parties involved. My wife and I personally adopted two boys out of an abusive home where human trafficking was present. I know first hand the trauma these children deal with not only then but even now several years later.

In regards to recovery treatment centers, unfortunately, a stigma against treatment centers does exist in our community. This "stigma" in my opinion is not necessarily undeserved in some cases. A never ending cycle of treatment, dropping out of treatment, for some crime and incarceration, is pervasive. Citizens are weary of the crimes being perpetrated by some to feed their drug habit. Many have been victims who then put up their natural defense to those who would re-offend. In the end many of those seeking treatment are sometimes lumped into one law-breaking class, often times unfairly, but this is the reality of the environment.

Regarding community revitalization, in spite of our many issues created by the opioid epidemic, revitalization continues. Thanks to the many hard working local entrepreneurs and developers, a renewed hope has been found and much work is being accomplished on several fronts. New businesses are being created and progress is being made. Unfortunately, Economic and Community Development has been hampered by a continued narrative of drug use and decay. JobsOhio has mentioned this to us on several occasions. While business and job numbers are improving, and infrastructure and available buildings and business parks continue to be

built, the 20-ton opioid elephant is weighing on our chances for “sustainable” revitalization.

The number of treatment providers and residential housing have skyrocketed in our community over the last 3-5 years. Yet even with this increased capacity our overdose and death numbers rise and more and more strain is placed on our community both socially and financially. The proliferation of out of town clients seeking treatment in Portsmouth/Scioto County is only adding to our fiscal strain at the municipal and county level. You cannot reduce a problem in our area by adding to the problem. In my humble opinion, we have reached a tipping point. This tipping point is best defined when local private resources can no longer support quality healthcare for those in treatment, and local government can no longer fund the ever increasing needs to provide for the adequate response to crime, and the safety of its citizens, as a result of strains on staffing and overall costs. Simply put, the current situation WILL eventually bankrupt our county and this situation will expand beyond our county into the rest of the state. In reality, it has already begun.

I am a firm believer in more local control of the monitoring and approval of treatment providers. Tax paying citizens want to see local government and resources re-established as the main point of contact for services. Too many local activities have been regulated away via state boards and departments. I believe that local ADAMHS Boards should be VERY involved in the treatment center certification process and be a strong part of any and all investigations surrounding inferior healthcare. I believe lack of visibility and oversight at the local level has allowed some treatment providers to prey upon victims instead of helping victims. Recovery statistics are not widely shared and many patients are trapped in an endless cycle of MAT where recovery is a dream and providers are benefiting financially from their demise. Medicaid data should be widely shared with ADAMHS Boards to assure proper needed healthcare is received and abuse is not occurring. In my opinion, OhioMHAS regulated this away from the local ADAMHS Boards but cannot provide adequate inspection or follow-up to complaints.

ADAMHS Boards are HIPPA confidentiality required so having Medicaid data has never been an issue.

Citizens deserve more oversight and local oversight is best. Local control of ADAMHS Boards and their respective member appointments is important. After all, who knows the needs of the community better than those who live in it? At the local level we look into the eyes and hearts of those we serve every day. We listen and we respond the best we can. By doing so you learn things that otherwise can't be learned, and you use better judgement because you have the facts, at times, literally right around the corner.

Senator Johnson's legislation will help address these issues surrounding ADAMHS Board's across the state. Supportive legislation already exists in the House.

I believe we can and will recover. Many care about our community and we will continue to work hard to bring about sustainable success. We need assistance from the General Assembly to do so.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today and I am available for any questions on or off topic of my testimony today.

Thank you.

Bryan K. Davis

Scioto County Commissioner