Ohio House Community and Family Advancement Committee
House Bill 427—Addiction Overdose Response Programs
Written Testimony of Dennis R. Hetzel
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On behalf of the members of the Ohio News Media Association, which represents newspaper and digital news outlets across the state, I thank committee members for this opportunity to express support for House Bill 427, sponsored by Representative Ron Young. We are specifically supportive of a provision in HB 427 that would require the Ohio Department of Health to produce monthly reports and issue a press release on drug overdose deaths.

Ohio's drug overdose crisis has decimated communities and families and placed our state in the national spotlight. As policymakers, community leaders, and others grapple with the crisis and pursue solutions, information is vital to the response. Ohioans need to understand the scale of the drug overdose epidemic at a local level before they can embrace solutions. Awareness is key and we believe HB 427 will provide vital and timely information to assist with educating the public and addressing the crisis.

Under the bill, the Ohio Department of Health will issue a news release each month along with publication of a report detailing the number of drug overdose deaths across the state. This report will break out the number of deaths by county and be posted on the ODH website. This information will assist media outlets with credible information as they report on the crisis. Over time, as officials and communities respond to the drug overdose epidemic, citizens should be able to assess trends down to county levels.

If there are any issues or concerns regarding this important provision of HB 427, we welcome the opportunity to work with interested parties and thank Rep. Young for including us in prior discussions. Thank you again for your consideration.