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Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 258

Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid

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Chairman Huffman, Vice-Chair Hackett, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Senate Finance Subcommittee on Health and Medicaid, I appreciate you giving me time today to present testimony on Senate Bill 258 which would enter Ohio into the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact, otherwise known as PSYPACT.

The 1999 Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health noted:

"Even more than other areas of health and medicine, the mental health field is plagued by disparities in the availability and access to its services."

Many Ohioans struggle to access mental health services. Recent research provided to me by the Ohio Psychological Association notes:

- 53% of adults with mental illness, and 58% of adolescents with major depression, do not get treatment.
- In Ohio, suicides increased by 24% from 2017 to 2018, and
- Overall mortality has risen by 21.6%.

However, if we can improve access, there is hope:

- 72% of Adolescents and Adults with mental health issues report improved functioning from evidence-based mental health treatment.

Through this compact, PSYPACT, this legislative body could increase access by expanding the use of Telepsychology, a delivery approach shown to be effective, increasing access, with more versatility and affordability.

PSYPACT is an interstate cooperative agreement that aims to increase access through Telepsychology and Temporary Authorization to Practice:

- It authorizes telepsychology and temporary practice across state lines, by creating a regulatory framework to allow Psychologists licensed in one state to provide services in another while ensuring client safety.
- By joining this compact, Ohio would allow the interstate commerce of psychological services, while maintaining our high level of consumer protections.
- Through PSYPACT, Ohio would expand access to services in rural Ohio and to all clients having difficulty getting to appointments.
- PSYPACT increases the ability of Ohioans in need of specialized treatment to connect with a specialist.
- PSYPACT also allows a client to maintain continuity of care while traveling, going away to college, or for those who relocate.
- PSYPACT ensures patient protections by maintaining Ohio's standards of care and providing a mechanism for discipline and accountability.

PSYPACT's certification allows psychologists, who hold unrestricted licenses, to practice across state lines, eliminating the regulatory burden of being licensed in each compact state.

States where the client receives services can limit or revoke a psychologist's authority to practice in their state.

Currently, there are 12 states in the compact, with 16 others considering the same legislation, including all of our neighbors. By participating in PSYPACT, Ohio and other states agree to hold psychologists accountable to the same degree as if the services had been provided in the home state of licensure.

Telepsychology alone will not solve Ohio's access issues or drug problems. What it will do is expand our options and allow for better allocation of our resources to help isolated Ohioans who suffer from mental illness and addiction get the service they need and deserve.

Chairman Huffman, thank you again, and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.