



## **Representative Richard Brown**

### House Bill 10 Testimony:

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, and Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 10. I wanted to highlight a few of the details on the funding of the Governor's Office of Drug Policy in addition to Rep Stoltzfus' testimony.

#### **APPROPRIATION/FUNDING REALITIES**

- The 5.5 million dollar a year appropriation for this bill represents **.0162%** of the FY 2020 budget and **.0153%** of the FY 2021 budget in Ohio.
- When trying to determine an amount to request for funding, we looked at funding for the Office of Consumers' Counsel (OCC) for some direction. Although the OCC has been around since 1976 as an advocate for residential utilities customers, its role has changed at times, depending on circumstances. In the financial crisis and recession of 2008-2009, the OCC's mission of advocacy for utility users took on a more emergent role as people's ability to pay utility bills dropped precipitously. OCC's mission then, like the mission of the Office of Drug policy now, was to act emergently to help stop a crisis situation affecting average Ohioans. OCC provided information to its customers and educated consumers about issues relevant to their utility issues, much like the Office of Drug Policy is created to act as a resource for information and education to people about the opioid crisis, addiction, and treatment. OCC's funding in 2008-2009 was \$5.5 million annually, to pay for its executive director, staff, personnel; to maintain its general operations; to disseminate information to citizens/customers; and, and to engage in education outreach. Although the substantive issues dealt with or to be dealt with by the OCC and the Office of Drug Policy differ, there is a sufficient similarity of function and mission to use OCC's funding as a reasonable general guideline for the funding of the Office of Drug Policy.

- The Office of Consumer’s Counsel, which the Office of Drug Policy is modeled on from a funding stand point, will continue to get a 5.5 million dollar appropriation based upon the last budget. This shows that the OCC appropriation has been stable over time and is needed to continue to fund the agency.
- In the latest Ohio budget, organizations such as **The Commission on Service and Volunteerism** received just under **\$9.9 million** a year; **The Ohio Arts Council** received **\$12.7 million** a year; the **Thoroughbred Development** under the Racing Commission alone received **\$1.4 million** a year, in addition to another **\$8.5 million** for “**Horse Race Development,**” which involves upgrading some old horse racetracks. While the funding of these programs is arguably important, surely we can afford to fund the Office of Drug Policy within the Governor’s Office, which will be dedicated to vital mission of eradicating the opioid crisis and saving Ohioans’ lives, in an annual amount far less than the above-mentioned appropriations, yet still sufficient to do the job.
- Indiana’s Office of Drug Policy, which has been lauded by the Trump administration as a model for similar offices in other states, used a **\$10.9 million federal grant** to launch its office in its initial year of operation. The amount requested in this appropriation per year, \$5.5 million, is about one-half of the amount Indiana used to start its office.

### **HB 10 IS NEEDED, AS THE OPIOID CRISIS RAGES ON**

- To those who may believe that Ohio has turned the corner in this crisis and opioid deaths are decreasing, that is simply not accurate, particularly in certain areas of the state, like Franklin County, where deaths from opioid overdoses have risen in 2019. As recently as September 2019, 10 people died in a 26 hour span in Columbus. This episode of multiple deaths over a one or two day period is not uncommon and has occurred repeatedly in Franklin County and elsewhere in Ohio. **The opioid crisis is not over.**
- This month, **45 lbs.** of fentanyl was seized in one incident in Dayton. **This was enough fentanyl to kill the entire population of Ohio several times over!** We need an office of drug policy, like that which will be created by HB 10. It will be an office which is more than a mere working group and more than a mere taskforce. It will serve to coordinate a state-wide, strategic, comprehensive response to the current opioid crisis, and to continue to work tirelessly to attack this problem. The Office of Drug Policy will not merely be a think tank, or a working group, or a task force; instead, it will be an active participant in the fight to defeat the opioid crisis in Ohio, actively engaging and working with local activists, community groups, and non-profit groups to battle this scourge.

- Proponents of HB 10 testified in the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee in support of HB 10, which passed that committee unanimously.
- **The Prevention Action Alliance (“PAA”)** provided persuasive oral and written testimony in support of HB 10, asserting that HB 10 will provide “[a] system for incorporating best practices and emerging evidence” which “would also be able to support practitioners to adopt and use that information. **This is what we are missing and what House Bill 10 will provide to us – a system to incorporate the latest research and evidence into the prevention and treatment of substance misuse and addiction.**” Further, noting some of the specific provisions of HB 10, PAA testified that “[t]he coordination of quarterly reports and stakeholder meetings will bolster the state’s infrastructure in how we track the progress and success of our drug related efforts and will increase the knowledge and understanding of these efforts among public officials.” And, PAA additionally noted that “[t]he creation of a hotline and resource database will allow the public to easily access information greatly reducing barriers to access and knowledge about resources and programs throughout the state to help with addiction treatment and prevention.”
- **The Tuscarawas Anti-Drug Coalition** testified that “there are many challenges that communities face to address substance use and addiction issues. However, **we know that when we have resources, support, use best practices, we are effective in the work we do.** The establishment of the Office of Drug Policy within the Office of the Governor makes sense. House Bill 10 will provide us a system to incorporate the latest research and evidence into the prevention and treatment of substance misuse and addiction. It will afford communities to network better, as we will be able to share and adopt what is working across the state and nation. When each community is healthy, we are better as a whole. The potential of this office to coordinate and share information, best practices and eliminate barriers that impede many from getting the services they need is a game changer to creating a healthier and stronger Ohio. **\*\*\*The creation of this office with its 5.5 million dollar appropriation would aid the work being done on the ground tremendously and would strengthen the foundation of progress that we have made for years to come.**”
- And, Alicia Nelson, Director of the **Recovery Ohio Initiative**, the initiative created by Governor DeWine by an Executive Order to address the drug epidemic in Ohio, provided written testimony in support of the Office of Drug Policy, stating that “HB 10 makes permanent an office within the Governor’s staff to coordinate drug related efforts across state agencies and local governments.” Gov. DeWine and the leaders at the RecoveryOhio initiative support HB 10 and agree that it will be a crucial tool to attack the drug epidemic in Ohio, whether it is the current opioid crisis or a later problem involving a different drug, like meth amphetamines.

- The Office of Drug Policy within the Governor’s Office, if properly funded, will help to ensure that the next crisis doesn’t cost the state millions as has our current addiction crisis. Strong investment now is key to ensuring savings in the long term. The level of funding requested in HB 10 is what is needed now. This level of funding may not be needed in the future, and if not, then it can be scaled back as warranted in the future.

### **WHAT NEEDS TO BE FUNDED**

Adequate funds are needed now to perform the following activities which are crucial to the success of HB 10 and the ongoing fight to stem the opioid crisis and future drug issues:

- Establish a wide-ranging **on-line database of resources and treatment options** across the state. As it stands now, no such database is centrally available. This would need to be thoroughly researched, established, and vetted by appropriate technical and medical people to insure its viability, efficacy, and accuracy.
- Establish a **24/7 hotline** to answer questions and provide accurate information to local governments, first responders, addicts, and their friends and families. The goal is create an easily accessible resource which is tantamount to the “911” of non-emergent addiction assistance.
- Establish an **advertising/marketing campaign** to inform the public of the new “drug czar,” the hotline, the on-line information database, and the efforts by state and local governments.
- Engage in **Grant writing** for federal and private opportunities to find additional funding for the fight against addiction.
- Create a **quarterly report** detailing best practices and ongoing results and statistics, to be shared with legislators for oversight.
- **General operating expenses.**
- **Hiring and retaining a knowledgeable staff**, including an executive director, to carry out all of the directives and missions of the legislation.

In summary, we believe that the \$11 million appropriation request contained in HB 10 is reasonable and necessary to provide adequate funding to this new office.