
Prevention Action Alliance

Lifetime Prevention | Lifetime Wellness

Ohio Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee Prevention Action Alliance October 2, 2019

Good afternoon, Chairman Schuring, Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member O'Brien, and members of the Senate General Government and Agency Review Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as a proponent in consideration of House Bill 10 ("HB 10"), a bill to establish a Governor's Office of Drug Policy. My name is Marcie Seidel, and I am the Executive Director of Prevention Action Alliance (PAA). PAA is a 32-year-old statewide nonprofit based in Columbus, Ohio. We are dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. PAA offers a wealth of resources, training services, grants, and advocacy opportunities for those who are active in the prevention and mental health fields.

I have worked in the prevention field for quite some time, and during that time I have seen many changes. As administrations change and new issues arise, the behavioral healthcare field has done all it can to care for and protect Ohio's families. I am happy to work during a time when the state increasingly understands what we do and its importance. I am extremely happy to see this increased understanding materialize into impactful pieces of legislation.

Over time, the behavioral healthcare landscape will change, new issues will arise, and our field's body of research and results will improve. However, as we know all too well in behavioral health, the presence of better knowledge does not necessarily mean people will make better choices. A system for incorporating best practices and emerging evidence 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 us—a system to incorporate the latest research and evidence into the prevention and treatment of substance misuse and addiction. A stronger behavioral healthcare sector will create better outcomes for all of Ohio's families and ultimately create a stronger Ohio.

There are many promising aspects within this bill that we as an organization happily support.

The 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.

The 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 office's ability to research and build partnerships will keep our state at the forefront of national policy changes, best practices, and program sustainability.

Lastly, the impact of the \$ 5.5-million appropriation in this bill should not be understated. It is an investment that will elevate our work to another level by increasing our reach, building our workforce, and strengthening our outcomes.

The Office of Drug Policy will be more than just another government office, it is an invaluable step in building a network of efforts currently taking place all throughout our state. This is something that we in the prevention field have been wanting for quite some time. The efforts of the Governor and the General Assembly in this space has been phenomenal and we would like to see these efforts remain strong for many years to come.

Thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 10, and I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.