



Representative DJ Swearingen

Sponsor Testimony

HB 523

Chairwoman Carruthers, Vice-Chair Pavliga, Ranking Member Boyd, and the member of the Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee, thank you for bringing HB 523 up for its first hearing. HB 523 is a much needed bill that offer the flexibility to the local mental health, addiction, and recovery boards to increase efficiency and patient care and focus. This bill does that through a variety of avenues.

First, it will allow the county commissioners to set the size of the board. This is important because each region and county in Ohio is different, and each area has unique patient needs that have to be met. In this bill, the boards have the ability to choose to have an 18 member board, a 15 member board, a 12 member board, a 9 member board, or a 6 member board based on what they believe to be best for their communities' needs and patient demands.

Secondly, the bill allows for more local control on who gets appointed to the board. The county commissioners of the boards will appoint two-thirds of the members, and the director of mental health and addiction services will appoint the last third of the board. This was again done with the intention that the county commissioners know the local needs and can verify the best candidates for appointments from the communities in the district.

The bill still requires that the individuals being appointed to the board have knowledge and expertise on the matter. People who have received addiction or mental health services, parents or relatives of a person who has received these services, and a clinician are still required to sit on the board. The terms will also stay the same except that when a board is established on or after the effective date of this amendment, the initial appointments shall be staggered among the members as equally as possible with terms of two years, three years, and four years.

As stated before, this bill allows for more local control over these boards in order to more effectively meet the needs of the different areas of Ohio. In my opinion, and based on conversations with local elected officials in my districts, a one size fits all approach has bogged down the effectiveness of some of the boards, and it is the patients who are at risk of suffering

because of it. We want to be sure that the people in these different areas of Ohio are being taken care of when they enter into these services.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on this bill today. I will take any questions the committee may have.