

Ohio House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee
HB 523 Testimony
David Guardiola
May 19, 2022

Chairwoman Carruthers, Vice-Chair Pavliga, and the members of the Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee: thank you for allowing me to speak regarding House Bill 523. My name is David Guardiola, and I am the Executive Director of Great Lakes Recovery Center in Sandusky County. Although my title as an Executive Director entails administrative duties, I also play an active role in treating clients on a daily basis as I have been working in the behavioral health field my entire career as a clinical social worker, covering both mental health and substance use disorders. Great Lakes Recovery Center provides outpatient mental health and addiction services, serving over 1,000 unduplicated clients. I am also an advocate for quality behavioral health services for individuals that fall under the Ohio Medicaid Manage Care Plans. The delivery of appropriate treatment services is often overlooked when treatment centers work with this population of clients and their families. My organization, Great Lakes Recovery Center, is exploring expansion of services in other Ohio rural communities as well as offering inpatient services. We receive referrals from the local courts, local children services, local mental health and recovery services board, as well as client referrals.

I am here today to express to you why I am in support of House Bill 523. Local mental health and recovery services boards are instrumental in planning and monitoring behavioral health services in the local communities. For the record, my organization does not have a contract with the local mental health and recovery services board. However, the collaboration and partnership are instrumental in ensuring clients receive services needed in a timely manner and that planning for services is not a sole financial decision, but a community-driven decision. The proposed legislation clarifies that local mental health and recovery services boards have the right to do a Request for Proposal or competitive bidding process if they choose to. As a behavioral health provider, I am surprised this wasn't already part of the Ohio law. Issuing Request for Proposals for behavioral health services increases competition among behavioral health providers, which in return increases quality of services and keeps cost for services in check. Local mental health and recovery services boards, which utilize public funds, should explore applications from different providers to ensure public funds are utilized in a responsible manner. We do that in the private sector all the time. We do that in our personal life as well. We look for the best quality product at the best price. I know that Request for Proposals for behavioral health services will increase competition among local providers and result in better quality services for individuals in need.

I am also in full support of removing the 120-day notice requirement in the current ORC 340. As a provider, and if my organization receives a contract with the local board in the future, I believe the contracted terms should be at the discretion of the two entities entering into the contract. The 120-day notice in the current law doesn't pertain to a current contract, rather it pertains to a future contract; something that was not even signed

by the two parties. I don't support the idea that as a provider I have to give the board four months' notice of a significant change into a future contract. Two organizations should have a contract based on their agreed terms, which may include period, services, and funding. At the end of the day, the state of Ohio should not mandate providers or Boards to provide notice to one another regarding a future contract. This should be left at the discretion of the parties involved in contract negotiation.

Thank you for your time and please support House Bill 523.

Respectfully,

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