



House Bill 523 – Written Proponent Testimony
House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee
May 19, 2022

Chair Carruthers, Vice Chair Pavliga, and members of House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee – my name is Erika Clark Jones and I am honored to serve as the CEO of the Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health (ADAMH) Board of Franklin County. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 523.

The ADAMH Board of Franklin County leads the planning, funding, and evaluation of community-based, recovery-oriented mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and support services by partnering with more than 30 nonprofit agencies throughout the county to provide accessible and affordable behavioral health services.

The events of the past two years have demonstrated that situations quickly evolve, and that the mental health and addiction needs of Ohioans are greater than ever. House Bill 523 provides Ohio's 50 behavioral health boards with the flexibility to be more responsive to the evolving needs of their communities through changes the composition and appointment of trustees, as well as addressing data collection and contracting practices.

As the largest board in the state, Franklin County's 18-member board of trustees plays a critical role in setting priorities for our investments. Understanding that the size of county behavioral health jurisdictions varies across the state, House Bill 523 adds flexibility to allow county boards to have fewer trustees. The composition of the board of trustees, not necessarily its size, is what is important to maintain the diversity of perspective required in section 340.02 of the Ohio Revised Code. This includes representation from individuals with lived experiences, family members, as well as behavioral health clinicians.

County boards are required to comply with HIPAA requirements when handling client data. House Bill 523 will help ensure access to Medicaid data to aid in the planning and evaluation of the board-funded programs and services. Data informs not only whether the programs we invest in help people get better, but also tells us where additional investment is needed.

Finally, House Bill 523 will help behavioral health boards modernize contracting requirements by updating what is known as the 120-day notice. The Ohio Revised Code currently requires written notice of at least 120 days for any substantial contract change or decision to not renew a contract with community mental health and addiction services provider. This long lead time makes boards less nimble and responsive to community needs. House Bill 523 removes that 120-day notice language. Instead, provider contracts will include a process for early termination that is balanced for all parties, including an appeal process for the provider.

House Bill 523 is a positive step forward, ensuring greater flexibility for the diversity of county behavioral health boards as we work to ensure equitable, accessible mental health and addiction services for all our communities throughout Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this legislation.

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