



Testimony Before the House Health Committee on House Bill 5

Chemical Dependency Counselor II Licensure Bill

February 23, 2021

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 5, sponsored by Representative Manning. I am Tom Walsh, Vice President of the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC), which represents the presidents and trustees of the twenty-three public two-year institutions throughout Ohio.

HB 5 establishes alternative licensing pathways for individuals pursuing a chemical dependency licensing counselor II license:

1. Establishes a new pathway that would require a more intensive practicum experience. Under this new pathway, a student must:
 - Hold an associate or bachelor's degree in a behavioral science or nursing with a specialization in chemical dependency counseling.
 - A minimum of 180 hours in chemical dependency counseling.
 - While holding a chemical dependency assistant license, complete 240 practicum experience in 2 semesters or less - including 2 hours per week of supervised practicum experience and intensive outpatient treatment level of care or higher.
 - Complete at least 1,000 hours of paid work as a chemical dependency counselor assistant.
 - Provide a recommendation from a supervisor to the Ohio Chemical Dependency Counselor Board.
 - Pass all required state chemical dependency counselor II licensure exams.
2. Creates a three-year window to allow individuals who held a chemical dependency assistant license prior to 2008 that have meet necessary practice, supervised training and recommendation requirements to take the required licensure exam.

As you are aware, Rep. Manning sponsored similar legislation during the 133rd General Assembly. While the bill was deliberated in the Senate Health Committee, concerns were raised that the original requirements for the alternative licensure pathways – specifically the requirement that 240 hours of practicum experience be completed in one semester – would inadvertently limit the number of higher education providers that could offer this new pathway to interested students. Rep. Manning worked with OACC and other stakeholders to help alleviate these concerns by lengthening the practicum requirements to two semesters and allowing ODMHAS and the Chemical Dependency Professionals Board to make further recommendations on appropriate levels of care for this new licensure requirement.

OACC wants to thank Rep. Manning for her commitment to our colleges and leadership in advancing this bill. We are grateful for her willingness to include the compromise language in HB 5 and believe the legislation will allow our community colleges to offer this new pathway to more students who want to pursue this new licensure pathway to get them into the field quicker. HB 5 is a balanced approach that will help more chemical dependency counselors, the provider community and our college graduates address the drug addiction challenges facing our state.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 5. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.