

## House Bill 452 testimony

### **Professional background:**

- 35 years employed in the Addictions Field
  - Direct Clinical Service- 20 years direct service in a variety of treatment venues inclusive of Inpatient Adolescent Addictions Treatment, Inpatient Psychiatric Treatment, Intensive Outpatient Treatment, Jail based treatment, and private practice.
  - Administrative- 15 Years as Clinical Director of the Lorain County ADAS Board and the Summit County ADM Board.
  - Volunteerism- Board of Directors at Two recovery Service Organizations (Let's get Real- Lorain, and Truly Reaching You- Akron), Secretary of the Ohio Clinical Roundtable, Member Summit County Opiate Task Force, Member Education Committee of the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board, and volunteer at "the Lantern" program- Cleveland.
  - Academic Professor of Instruction University of Akron, Adjunct Faculty Cleveland State University, Instructor in the Department of Psychiatry- Northeast Ohio Medical University

### **Personal Background:**

- Married 30 years with three daughters, 3 dogs, and 1 ½ cats.
- Homeowner with a stellar credit report
- Passionate Cleveland Baseball fan, wilderness traveler, canoeist, cyclist, and backpacker.

### **Recovery:**

- Underscoring all of this is being a recovering alcoholic/addict who has been clean and sober since 12/27/1984.

Early in 1984 I was an unemployable homeless USMC veteran on felony probation burdened with a massive substance use problem. The Social Security Administration tallied my income at just over \$400 that year. In one of the biggest blessings of my life arrived when the Cuyahoga Common Pleas Court mandated me to drug treatment (a couple times). In that treatment environment I had a profound and life changing encounter. Meeting Joe S. and Sharon B, my drug counselors. The compassion, understanding, and direction received from those two professionals forever altered the course of my life. I promised then, and continue today, to dedicate my life to helping those impacted by addiction.

Most recently these recovery travels have included the chance to enter academia. The University of Akron has blessed me with the opportunity to shepherd in the next generation of

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addictions professionals, social workers, and policy advocates. Akron! The birthplace of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Having always been open with students regarding my recovery, I'm routinely approached by people like me who saved their money, took out loans, and are investing time and effort to get a degree. All towards having a career centered on helping others. Many aspire to work in Ohio's treatment programs, children's services agencies, correction facilities, hospitals, and schools in hopes of helping others struggling with addiction. These students, many of whom are adult learners, are talented, smart, passionate, and eager to help. Unfortunately, some of them are encountering barriers to the workplaces that desperately need them. Not because of any fault of their own, but due to unanticipated restrictive language in Ohio Code on what constitutes a master's degree.

The certifying body of all accredited social work programs offers an incentive for graduate students who have risen to an honors level of academic performance and potential during their undergraduate Social Work experience. This honors program is referred to as "Advanced Standing." For instance, where our traditional Master of Social Work (MSW) program is 60 credit hours and takes 2-4 years, the advanced standing option is an intensive 36 credit hour program that is completed in a three-semester year. Unfortunately, the present Ohio Code states a recognized master's program must be no less than 40 hours, thus marginalizing some of our best and brightest graduates. Social Work Advanced-Standing programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and recognized at state Social Work Licensure Boards. In addition, our MSW program offers 15 credit hours (5 courses) of addictions specific curriculum, equal to 225 academic clock hours. This is more addiction focus than many medical schools even offer.

Passing HB 452 removes this restrictive language and opens the door for these accelerated students to obtain an LICDC at a time of historic need. I humbly ask, on behalf of Ohio Treatment Programs and the talented professionals who aspire to work at them, to pass this legislation.

In service,

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