



Ohio

Chemical Dependency  
Professionals Board

Testimony before the House State and Local Government Committee

House Bill 452- Regards the Chemical Dependency Professionals Board and its regulation of chemical dependency professionals

March 30, 2022

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee, I am Jill Smock, Executive Director of the Chemical Dependency Professionals (CDP) Board.

Thank you on behalf of the CDP Board for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony for the passage of HB452. The CDP board currently provides certification and licensure to close to 13,000 professionals with a scope of practice to provide substance use disorder treatment and behavioral health prevention services; a workforce vital to respond to so many in Ohio affected by the opiate epidemic, and now the residual effects of the COVID pandemic. CDP Board ensures these professionals have achieved a specialty focus of education and experience in substance use disorder treatment, or prevention, to provide skilled and competent services to the citizens of Ohio.

The behavioral health workforce shortage in Ohio is a topic of grave concern echoed by associations, treatment providers, the recovery community, individuals and families in need of substance use disorder treatment along with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and our Governor. This bill is imperative to be able to increase the workforce while maintaining the integrity and standards of the chemical dependency license. A huge focus of the bill is to remove restrictive language currently in the ORC and allow the Board and the field to make changes in Rule that will be reflective of today's higher education, the degree programs offered, and make future rule changes if warranted down the road.

Currently in order to obtain the Licensed Independent Chemical Dependency Counselor license (LICDC), an applicant must have a 40-semester hour master's degree in a behavioral science and within that master's degree have obtained hours in ten different specified courses listed in ORC 4758.20. Some of these courses, for

instance, research methods and statistics, is not necessarily education needed within the scope of a substance use disorder clinician, nor is it even offered in degree programs such as Addiction Counseling; a program that rarely existed when the statutes in 4758.20 were created. And required human development courses are now usually part of a bachelor's degree program and not often repeated within a master's degree program, but human development courses have to be taken within a master's degree for the LICDC license to be awarded. Also, at this time the board is having to inform 4- 5 applicants a week that their master's degree does not meet the requirements for independent licensure since they graduated under an Advanced Standing or Accelerated graduate degree program; a common incentive offered to those who graduate in an undergraduate accredited program such as social work and allows students to obtain a master's degree without repeating some of the coursework covered in their bachelor's program. Or the board has to inform an LICDC applicant that their master's degree which specialized in addiction counseling but was only 36 credit hours does not meet the 40-hour graduate degree requirement for licensure. Higher education changes to reflect society and workforce needs, and we need this bill to allow modernization that adapts for today's education standards and criteria. Please note as the bill states, the board's intent is to update current standard through rule making while maintaining the content areas and hour requirement that are substantially similar to keep the integrity of the independent license.

This bill also allows for an additional pathway to a desired license by the workforce as their scope allows them to diagnose under supervision; the LCDCIII. Currently only those who have a bachelor's degree in a behavioral science or nursing can meet the education degree requirement of this license. This bill would allow another pathway for higher licensure for those who have a bachelor's degree in any field but also obtain additional college education with an associate level degree or certificate in substance use disorder counseling along an supervised practicum or internship. This will give a pathway to obtain a LCDCIII license without having to complete a second bachelor's degree. Again, this gives another opportunity to increase the desperately needed behavioral health workforce with qualified professionals who have obtained a substantially more solid foundation in addiction counseling than possibly other behavioral science degrees and encouraging an upward career path in this field without unnecessary degree roadblocks.

The CDP Board does not have the ability to collect fines for discipline violations like most other occupational licensing boards so this bill will put the board at par with other boards. Our board has the authority to offer a master's degree endorsement to colleges and universities to have their course curriculum reviewed thus ensuring students the degree program they complete will meet the license education requirements. HB 452 would also allow that review to occur for associate and bachelor undergraduate degree programs as well. The bill also begins the language changes from the outdated term of "chemical dependency" to the more appropriate "substance use disorder".

While some of the changes in this bill may seem minor language “clean up” changes, the CDP Board assures this Committee that without swift passage of HB 452, our board will continue to be unable to license worthy applicants who have dedicated several years and substantial financial commitment to obtain independent licensure.

The Board would like to thank the bill sponsor Representative Gayle Manning and the Ohio Alliance for Recovery Providers, The Ohio Council, the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and individuals who serve on the Education and Training Committee of the CDP Board for working with Representative Manning during the drafting of HB452. Passage of this bill will allow the Board to update educational standards for substance use disorder treatment license applicants and decrease unnecessary barriers for licensure thus addressing workforce needs in our State.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 452. I am happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted by

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Executive Director

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