



**Proponent Testimony on House Bill 452
House State and Local Government Committee
March 30, 2022**

Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee for the opportunity to offer testimony on this very important House Bill 452. I also want to thank Representative Manning for sponsoring this bill.

I am Thomas Stuber and I present today as the President of the Ohio Alliance of Recovery Providers (OARP), an organization representing more than 40 of the largest addiction treatment and prevention agencies throughout Ohio. OARP strongly endorses this legislation and sees it as an important intervention towards addressing the critical workforce shortage which significantly impacts our ability to respond to the opiate epidemic. I am also President of The LCADA Way, the largest Behavioral Health Agency specializing in substance use disorder treatment and prevention in Lorain, Medina, and Erie Counties, and have just recently opened services in Cuyahoga County.

This bill is extremely important to ensure that we have an adequate workforce to address the opiate epidemic, and it comes at a very critical time as we struggle with the behavioral health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Overdose deaths in Ohio have surged. Last year we saw overdose deaths in Ohio increase by 22%, and they are projected to increase by another 28% this year. It is also important to note that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's most recent report on Behavioral Health Workforce cites that 80% of those with a substance use disorder will not receive treatment and necessary services as a result of not having a sufficient workforce to provide care.

In polling OARP members, each identified between four and up to 100 open clinical positions. They also identified that it takes between three to four months to fill an open position. Several identified that they have had several positions open for more than six months. Each day a single clinical position is not filled, potentially 12 to 20 individuals will not receive treatment.

These workforce shortages result in significant capacity problems. Demand far exceeds current capacity which results in individuals with substance use disorders, including opioid use disorders, not being able to access treatment. Again, this is a life and death situation with the increasing rate of overdoses occurring when someone is not able to access care.

HB 452 will permit the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board to modernize the requirements and improve the process for individuals entering the field as well as streamline the process of current professionals maintaining and advancing their licensure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions.

Thomas Stuber
OARP President