



**Ohio House Finance  
Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  
Testimony on HB 33**

(SFY 2024-25 Operating Budget)

March 28, 2023

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeny and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 33, Governor Mike DeWine's Executive Budget Proposal for state fiscal years 2024-2025.

I am Dustin McKee, the CEO of the Ohio Psychological Association (OPA). OPA represents the nearly 3,500 psychologists who currently practice in Ohio. Our state's psychologists practice in community and private settings, hospitals, businesses, and academia. Psychologists in Ohio are the scientist practitioners of the behavioral health (BH) system, producing the scientific research, innovation and knowledge about the best practices in behavioral healthcare. Our members leverage this psychological science and our clinical experience in both clinical and non-clinical settings to improve the mental health and wellness of Ohioans.

OPA has identified several key policy and advocacy priority areas, including: Addressing the Behavioral Health Workforce Crisis, Improving Access to Treatment and Services, Enforcement of Insurance Parity for Behavioral Health, Expanding Prevention Efforts, and Addressing Health Disparities in marginalized populations in our state. We are pleased to report that the Governor's 'As Introduced' budget addresses all these priority areas. The Governor's budget builds on the substantial accomplishments of this Administration as well as the significant work and noteworthy accomplishments of members of this committee and the Ohio General Assembly as a whole. We applaud Governor DeWine for this budget proposal's historic investments in mental health and substance use care. We urge the Ohio House to continue building on their behavioral health system-related accomplishments over the last several years by supporting the investments in the behavioral health of Ohioans contained within HB 33.

OPA respectfully requests that the Ohio House support HB 33's investments in the behavioral health system, including:

- Increased Investments in the Behavioral Health Workforce through 1) the 10% increase in the Medicaid rates for community behavioral health services, and 2) expanded collaborations with Ohio's Centers of Excellence and behavioral health system partners to provide paid internships and targeted investments to fill the need for more quality providers in Ohio;

- Expansion of Prevention and Early Identification program by scaling the initiatives outlined in Ohio's Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan and increasing the number of Early Childhood Mental Health Certified Providers;
- Crisis Continuum of Care services investments to continue to fund and expand initiatives including the 988/call/chat/text lifeline, mobile crisis services, CIT Training for first responders, BH urgent care, crisis centers, step down facilities and new state hospital bed capacity;
- Recovery Support programming expansion through investments in group housing, clubhouse and peer recovery programs;
- Innovative Research to get to the root causes of mental illness and addiction;
- Supporting Improvements in Addiction Treatment approaches, by funding mobile Medication Addiction Treatment pilot program and recovery housing quality improvement efforts.
- Insurance Parity investments to raise awareness and conduct effective enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008;
- Student Wellness & Success funding to provide greater access to school-based health and behavioral health services, which are critically important for learning and preparing students to achieve their potential;

Despite our progress over the last several years, more work must be done to address the behavioral health needs of Ohioans. As others have indicated in their testimony, wait times in our state for behavioral health services continue to be too long, often lasting weeks and even months before individuals receive care. These wait times can be directly traced back to the need for significant and sustained investments in the behavioral health workforce in our state. By the time someone asks for help, their needs are urgent, so we cannot afford to allow wait times to be the norm in Ohio's behavioral health system. We owe it to our fellow citizens to be ready when they reach out for support.

Ohio must continue its work exploring targeted investments in BH workforce development, which should include investments in tuition reimbursement, loan forgiveness, scholarships and the like for individuals entering the behavioral health field.

OPA is also supportive of - and a signatory to - the request by the Coalition for Healthy Communities to expanding the Governor's proposed 10% increase for Medicaid community behavioral health services by an additional 10% (\$220 million) over the biennium to strengthen the behavioral health workforce and incentivize careers in community behavioral healthcare.

### **Conclusion**

OPA commends Governor DeWine for making historic investments in Ohio's BH System. We look forward to continuing to work with this Administration and members of the Ohio General Assembly to continue to address the mental health and addiction needs of our fellow Ohioans. Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today.