



Representative Gail Pavliga
Ohio's 72nd House District

House Bill 97

Chairman Cutrona, Vice Chair Gross, Ranking member Somani, and members of the Health Provider Services Committee. Thank for the opportunity to speak on house bill 97.

According to the U.S. department of Labor and statistics, Ohio has about 1,200 practicing adult psychiatrists, which is approximately one for every 10,000 people, and more than half of those psychiatrists are over the age of 60.

Simply put, there are not enough mental health professionals in Ohio to adequately handle our behavioral health needs, and without substantive changes our issues will only get worse.

This piece of legislation will create a new license certified mental health assistant for the State of Ohio. This is an innovated solution developed by North East Ohio Medical school to create a new physician extender training pathway, similar to the physician assistants, but with an exclusive focus on mental health and substance use disorders.

These professionals would have the same basic experience of training that a physician assistant or a medical student would receive, but with a more focused clinical training experience with behavioral health and primary care.

The Certified Mental Health Assistants will have the ability to prescribe medication to patients in need and they will work directly under the supervision of a medical physician

HB 97 proposes a six-year pathway to practice which would include a bachelor's degree at the institution of a student's choice and then the two-year master's degree to become a certified mental health assistance or CMHA.

With the passage of this bill Ohio will become the first state in the country to offer such an innovative solution to the mental health crisis. I thank you again for your consideration of HB 97 and I ask for your support with this bill.

I am happy to answer any of your questions at this time.