

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
March 9, 2023
Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 33

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Carruthers, Vice Chair Liston, Ranking Member Hoops, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Leah Kaufman and I am the Assistant Vice President of Public Policy for Shatterproof, a national nonprofit dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis.

I want to begin by thanking the members of this committee for their important work on health and human services issues and, in particular, the Legislature's commitment to improving the mental health of citizens statewide. Shatterproof was founded in 2013 by Gary Mendell, who, after losing his son Brian to substance use disorder, recognized the need for a national organization to advocate for families impacted by this disease. Sadly, Gary's story is not an uncommon one. Gary channeled his grief into action, founding Shatterproof as a transformative force to reduce the number of lives lost to addiction.

Addiction is not new, but it is an ever evolving crisis frequently presenting us with new issues to address in our communities. Since the pandemic, the number of young Americans struggling with mental health conditions has increased dramatically. Seeking coping strategies, many have experimented with drugs, unaware of the extent to which fentanyl is now endemic in the illicit prescription drug supply. We've listened to too many stories about kids who purchased illicit Xanax, Adderall, or Oxycodone without a prescription thinking they were taking the same drugs they would get at a pharmacy, but instead, they end up consuming counterfeit pills containing deadly doses of fentanyl.

At Shatterproof, we are committed to advancing three main principles to address the addiction crisis, in Ohio and throughout the United States:

1. Transforming addiction treatment;
2. ending the stigma surrounding addiction; and,
3. educating and empowering communities to address this scourge.

We are **transforming addiction** treatment by encouraging changes to the health care system so that *all* Americans have access to evidence-based treatment that works. We created a quality treatment locator called ATLAS to help people struggling with addiction find and access treatment to meet their needs.

We are **combating stigma** by challenging the attitudes and behaviors that prevent loved ones from seeking treatment.

And we are **educating and empowering communities** by providing resources to support those struggling with addiction, giving them the greatest opportunity to achieve sustained success on their recovery journey.

We commend Governor DeWine for recognizing the substance use crisis that exists in Ohio and continuing to support initiatives that help individuals access treatment as well as prevention and education. Just earlier this week, Governor DeWine announced that the state

has launched a new data dashboard system to better track data on overdose deaths and other substance-use related measures statewide. We urge you to maintain the funding in the Governor's budget to continue the important work of Recovery Ohio that will increase screening and early intervention to ensure people receive needed treatment as well as create better data tracking and reporting through this dashboard on overdoses and other substance-use measures.

In addition, the state of Ohio should invest in a program that shows validated measures to assess the quality of addiction treatment facilities. Research shows that addiction can be treated effectively using certain clinical practices. But there is not currently any transparency into how addiction treatment facilities in Ohio are performing and delivering on these evidence-based practices. As a result, the quality of care varies and it's unclear whether facilities are doing the right things. This can make it hard for people to find high-quality addiction treatment for themselves or their loved ones.

Therefore, we urge that you include a provision in House Bill 33 that provides funding to the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to implement a platform that will allow people to search for and compare addiction treatment facilities to find high-quality care for themselves or their loved ones. A technology platform such as ATLAS, that we at Shatterproof maintain, provides real-time, important information to families seeking treatment, such as:

- where the treatment program is located,
- whether the facility is using best practices,
- what insurance or other methods of payment are accepted,
- what groups they serve, and
- the types of treatment services offered.
- Importantly, this platform also contains feedback from patients who have received care at a facility

Investment in a technology platform for people seeking treatment, their families, providers, and health insurers is a key step toward improving the quality of addiction care nationally by setting clear and transparent expectations.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. I urge your support for the implementation of a web-based platform that accurately assesses the quality of addiction treatment facilities. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.

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