



Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee., thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. My name is Sarah Channell, I am a certified family nurse practitioner at Lower Lights Health. I have been providing addiction treatment for over 7 years focusing on clients with a history of substance use disorder.

Lower Lights Health is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community health center. As such, our vision is to promote health and wellness in central Ohio, serving one individual and family at a time. All services: medical, vision, dental, mental health, counseling, and nutrition care as well as Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for substance use disorder are available to all regardless of their ability to pay.

As the Clinical Director of our Addiction Treatment program, I focus a lot of attention on community safety, barriers to treatment, and preventing medication misuse. I have seen many situations occur which have sparked concern for a safe storage of medication initiative. One such impactful event occurred when my patient's 2-year-old daughter ingested a buprenorphine tablet and ended up hospitalized. The child was urgently transferred to children's hospital and acquired thousands of dollars of healthcare costs which could have been prevented. "Keeping medications up high and safe" as every parent reports they do, is not effective enough.

This potentially fatal ingestion along with another accidental poisoning triggered a search for a better option for safe medication storage that we could provide to our clients. We piloted a program with the Overdose Prevention Task Force through the Union County Health Department providing locking pill bottles for all our MAT patients and have seen a positive impact on decreasing drug diversion and pilfering. Prior to implementing use of the locked pill bottles 39% of our clients on MAT self-reported experiences of missing medication both at home and at work. After implementing the locking pill vials the past year, there have been zero reports of missing medications for my patients. Locking pill bottles provides discreet storage and privacy options as well as enabling safe transport between work and home. These bottles give my patients and family members peace of mind that their meds will be there when needed and stored safely.

Last week, while my patient was in between homes and living with his grandmother, his 14-year-old cousin was sneaking his grandmother's medication a few pills at a time. The patient thanked me for providing the locking pill bottle because he knew his medications would be there when he got home. Past research and statistics show drug misuse first starts with teens using medication from their own parent's medicine cabinet. This locked bottle I provide to my patients helps to prevent one less accidental pediatric poisoning and/or intentional overdose in our community. I

hope more healthcare organizations, medication assisted treatment programs, and pharmacies use locking pill vials in the future for all controlled substance especially Buprenorphine products.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Ohio General Assembly to maintain language in the current budget that allocates \$1 million dollars to reimburse pharmacies for filling prescriptions in locking or tamper-evident pill vials for controlled MAT drugs. Thank you.

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