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Family Health Services, Inc
Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee
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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 Lauren Spoltman, and I am a pharmacist at Family Health Services, Inc. Today, I wanted to share how locking prescription vials help keep medicine safe in medication-assisted treatment programs.

Family Health Services of Darke County is a federally qualified health center located in Greenville, Ohio. We provide services for primary care, medication assisted treatment for substance use disorder, behavioral health, pharmacy, dental, eyecare, lab and radiology. Offering treatments for opioid use disorder in a rural community has presented tremendous rewards and a cast of challenges.

Individuals with opioid use disorder have a higher frequency of multiple social determinants of health as compared with our general primary care clinic population. Some common social determinants of health include: homelessness, transportation and financial issues. Due to these barriers, the living environments can often lead to medications becoming stolen, lost or mishandled.

Within our medication assisted treatment program, we prescribe several medicines including buprenorphine and naltrexone. These medicines have been shown to be very effective in treatment of substance use disorder. However, buprenorphine is a controlled substance that can be diverted to others. Patients often fear for the safety of the prescribed medication.

Included in our treatment population for individuals with opioid use disorders, are pregnant females who are suffering from the disease of addiction. Treatment of pregnant women is extremely rewarding and often there are multiple children in the home. One young, pregnant mother returned to a routine appointment to disclose that her toddler had recently been in the hospital after an unintentional overdose on the mother's prescribed buprenorphine. The mother had been storing her medication in a bottle in the bathroom and the unsupervised toddler ingested the medication. The good news was the overdose was recognized and the child received immediate medical attention and suffered no aftereffects.

Once learning of this situation, our clinic was on a mission to ensure this never happened again. That is when we learned of locking pill vials and integrated this into routine prescription habits for our patients on buprenorphine products for opioid use disorder. With education, patients have been very receptive to the locking-pill bottle.

More recently, we had two patients living in the same household, report their medications were stolen. The provider asked them if they were using a locking pill vial, and they said they were not because they filled at an outside pharmacy that does not offer locking pill vials. They were keeping their pill bottles hidden in a cookie jar.

Our pharmacists counsel patients on all new prescriptions and any changes in prescription. We try to encourage patients to keep medicines in a safe location, especially when they are being prescribed a controlled substance. Our pharmacy has started supplying buprenorphine products in locking pill vials to

try to reduce the risk of misuse or theft due to being in a locked container. This can also prevent children from getting into the medicine, which can lead to an accidental overdose.

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 MAT drugs. Thank you.