

Testimony for Senate Finance Committee

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Testimony Submitted by Dr. Andrew Moss:

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Dr. Andrew Moss, and I am a Board Member at Greater Common Good. Several years ago, I also provided subject-matter-expert guidance for Anchored to Hope in the development of its flagship product, Anchor4Me. As a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, independently licensed chemical dependency counselor, educator, administrator, and statewide regulatory leader, I have passionately served the behavioral healthcare community in Ohio for nearly two decades. In that time, I have directly worked with thousands of individuals who have experienced Substance Use Disorder. I was immediately drawn to Melinda Swan's work with Anchor4Me because it represents a valuable, relevant, and most importantly--accessible resource to individuals who are hindered by the ripple effects of addiction.

People with active Substance Use Disorder commonly experience consequential impacts across every important area of functioning. In addition to having a significant impact on brain chemistry, Substance Use Disorder also frequently causes a decline in a person's physical, emotional, social, educational, and occupational wellness. Many of my former clients found themselves in complete isolation by the time that they entered treatment, and the road to recovery so often is neither smooth nor linear. A significant majority of my former clients have been involved with the justice system due to their actions while in active addiction. After overcoming intense physiological and psychological distress to reach the early phase of sobriety, people then must develop a set of tools that will assist them with keeping their progress. I have worked extensively with people who have experienced multiple near-fatal overdoses prior to entering treatment, and these individuals remained at high risk for re-overdosing especially during their first days of sobriety.

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in 2020, providers universally struggled to connect clients to resources and supports. People in recovery became increasingly isolated and experienced relapse and overdose at alarming rates. Although COVID no longer restricts public interactions in the manner that it did in 2020, the effects of that extended period of social isolation further deepened disparities, especially in economically disadvantaged communities across the state. Workforce prospects were similarly impacted, as individuals who would typically participate as members of an active Ohio workforce found themselves sidelined by active addiction.

While the risks of overdose and other common pitfalls of early sobriety remain present, recovery is always a possibility. The opportunity to achieve sustained sobriety is greatly aided by the immediacy with which a person can access their resources and supports. I wholeheartedly believe in Anchor4Me and the work that Ms. Swan has put into the product because it recognizes the importance of timeliness in recovery. Individuals who use the product have immediate access to proven therapeutic activities and resources that serve as extensions of their clinical work and treatment plans. The absence of those tools can very literally

be the difference between life and death for someone in early recovery. There is realistically no way for the current system of treatment providers or community supports to meet all of the ever-expanding needs of Ohioans receiving care for Substance Use Disorder, so it is increasingly important to fund and support innovative technologies like Anchor4Me that bridge the gaps in care and community. I am confident that Anchor4Me will empower numerous individuals to maintain their momentum in recovery, successfully engage and re-engage in the workforce, and reduce the risk of recidivism for those who are justice-involved. People with Substance Use Disorder need and deserve to have every tool of recovery at their disposal so that they can realize their fullest potential in life.

Sincerely,

Dr. Andrew Moss, EdD, LPCC-S, LICDC-CS