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House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee
Substitute House Bill 523 – Proponent Testimony
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Chair Carruthers, Vice Chair Pavliga, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on Substitute House Bill 523.

Sub. House Bill 523 makes several changes to the law governing local mental health, addiction, and recovery boards and provides greater flexibility to locals in determining structures and processes that fit their community and ensure the best service delivery possible for citizens.

Sub. House Bill 523 allows the board of county commissioners in a district to determine the size of its local mental health, addiction, and recovery board. In a joint-county district, this decision would be made collectively by the boards of commissioners. Commissioners would have the option to change the board size to 18, 15, 14, 12, or 9 members. If a board of county commissioners wishes to keep its board at its current size of 18 or 14, it may do so without any notification. This flexibility will afford boards of county commissioners the opportunity to select a board size that best fits their community. The bill also allows commissioners to make size determination every four years, which provides ongoing options for counties.

Additionally, Sub. House Bill 523 would allow boards of county commissioners to appoint two-thirds of the local board members, with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services appointing the other one-third. CCAO supports this local input into the board member selection process. Sub. House Bill 523 also ensures that people with lived experience and their family members will be represented on the boards.

The bill outlines a formal process for a county to withdrawal from a joint-county district. Having clear instructions for boards of commissioners to follow with respect to plans and levy authority will help both the locals and the state navigate the process.

CCAO supports this legislation and the flexibility it offers boards of county commissioners to meet the needs of their local mental health, addiction, and recovery districts. CCAO thanks Representative Swearingen for introducing this legislation and respectfully asks the committee to favorably report Sub. House Bill 523.

