



News Now

John R. Kasich, Governor
Tracy Plouck, Director

Dec. 22, 2014

Dear Colleague,

Coming to a close of my first four years as a member of Governor John Kasich's Cabinet, it is a good time to thank you for being a partner in helping realize the OhioMHAS mission of providing statewide leadership of a high-quality mental health and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery system that is effective and valued by all Ohioans. Together, we have made Ohio a better place for all, and there is more work to be done. The editorial below is a nice overview of some of the administration's bigger accomplishments, but it is only a small part of what we have achieved together. In particular, I'd like to thank you for your steadfast commitment to helping us meet the needs of Ohioans with mental illness and addiction. This year alone, we have:

1. **Launched *Start Talking!* program to encourage youth to stay away from drugs:** In January, the Governor and First Lady launched *Start Talking!*, an initiative built on the knowledge that children of parents who talk to their teens about drugs are 50% less likely to use than those who do not. This four-pronged program offers tools that are free of charge to parents, schools and communities to help get the conversation started. *Start Talking!* has touched tens of thousands of lives in the first year, and more information is available at www.starttalking.ohio.gov.
2. **Worked to reduce the devastating impact of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome on mothers and babies:** Ohio has invested \$4.2 million to combat Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), a complex disorder that impacts newborns who have been exposed to addictive drugs, by reducing hospital stays by 30 percent. The hospitalization rate per 10,000 live births for NAS, symptoms of which include withdrawal, seizures, and low birth-weight, has gone from 14 in 2004 to 125 in 2013. The Maternal Opiate Medical Support (MOMS) program will support the treatment and support needs of a minimum of 300 mothers and their babies from prenatal care to one-year post birth in order to give newborns the best possible start in life.
3. **Invested in additional housing capacity for individuals with mental illness and addiction disorder:** Stable housing is a key need to support individuals living with mental illness and addiction in their recovery. By doubling the investment in the

Residential State Supplement program, as many as 800 individuals, many living with mental illness, will have access to this additional support. Also, an investment of \$10 million in recovery housing will open up access to over 650 people who need recovery housing in a sober environment.

4. **Created safe places and averted crisis for families with children who are at-risk:** In its second year, the *Strong Families, Safe Communities* program extended its reach to 46 total counties to provide care coordination and crisis intervention services for youth at risk due to a mental illness or developmental disability. A partnership between the Ohio Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Developmental Disabilities, the program provides resources to families to help stabilize youth ages 8-24 that were not previously available in every community.

5. **Reduced administrative costs and directed the savings into services:** Utilizing administrative savings achieved from the July 2013 consolidation of state-funded agencies for mental health and addiction services under a single umbrella, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) is funding an initiative to help link non-violent offenders in jails with community-based behavioral healthcare services. By saving \$3 million over two-years, funding was freed up to establish partnerships with local sheriffs and jails to provide programming that will reduce recidivism and increase public safety in a total of 49 counties.

Thank you again for your partnership. I, and all the employees of OhioMHAS, look forward to a continued productive relationship over the next four years. Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Tracy Plouck, Director

OhioMHAS



December 21, 2014

Editorial: A Job Well Done

Kasich's first term brought remarkable improvement

With last month's election a fading memory and the legislature adjourned for the year, Ohio looks to be in a short political lull for the holidays. It's a good time to consider how far the

state has come in the past four years under the leadership of Gov. John Kasich, who will begin his second term in January.

Even more so than most governors, Kasich had his work cut out for him from Day One. Welcomed by a lingering, deep economic downturn and an \$8 billion budget shortfall, Kasich quickly rolled up his sleeves. He plugged the budget hole and restored the state's rainy-day fund, which then contained \$1.78. Within two years, that figure was \$482 million.

He has created a climate and a streamlined economic-development approach that has helped gain back thousands of the 400,000 jobs that were lost under his predecessor, Ted Strickland. At the same time, and also with an eye to encouraging a stronger economy, Kasich got rid of the estate tax and cut income taxes. These tax moves were a particular boon to small businesses, which create the majority of new private-sector jobs in America.

Kasich can't be accused of favoring the wealthy over the needy; he has time and again proved himself to be both compassionate and pragmatic in his approach. At the same time he was helping middle-class business people keep more of their money and create jobs, he was backing programs to aid former convicts in their re-entry into the community, where they often struggle to find jobs and avoid recidivism.

Defying pressure from conservative ideologues, Kasich expanded Medicaid coverage in Ohio, saying he felt it was a moral obligation to see that the poor have access to health care. He also has directed additional state resources to fight Ohio's relatively high infant-mortality rate — which disproportionately affects the poor — and to provide immediate care to poor pregnant women, in a bid to forestall problems that occur when babies are born prematurely, underweight or drug-dependent.

In fact, Kasich's innovative Office of Health Transformation, headed by Greg Moody, has worked tirelessly to find innovative ways to help keep poor and lower-income Ohioans healthy. Like most of his decisions, this came out of Kasich's sense that it was the right thing to do and also the sensible thing: If Ohioans are healthier, they are less likely to require more costly care down the road and more likely to be contributing members of the community and the economy.

One major change that Moody's office was involved with was redirecting money from nursing homes, which have had an extremely powerful lobbying presence at the Ohio Statehouse for years, to home-based care. That care is more cost-effective and more popular with seniors and their families. In his second term, ensuring the quality of that care should be a priority.

Kasich doesn't plan to slow down after winning re-election in a landslide. He will continue efforts to increase Ohio's severance taxes on oil and gas drillers, reduce income taxes for all Ohioans and reform the state's deeply flawed charter-school law.

It's been a very busy four years for Kasich and a good four years for Ohioans, whose prospects are immeasurably better today than they were when he stepped into office. May his next four be as successful and beneficial for the state.

READ EDITORIAL HERE: www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2014/12/21/01-a-job-well-done.html

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(12/17/14) *Canton Repository (Editorial)* [Opiate stats should raise alarm bells](#)

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