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Ms. Lori Criss
Director, Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services
c/o Ms. Kathryn Remer [Kathryn.Remer@mha.ohio.gov]

Dear Director Criss,

It is with very mixed feelings and an extremely heavy heart that I must offer my immediate resignation from the Geauga County Board of Mental Health and Recovery Services (GCBMHRC). I was honored to have been appointed to this Board in October 2021. Unfortunately, as you likely have seen in the media and other sources, the Board is extremely dysfunctional and I am not willing to continue to tolerate the actions, including personal insults of some members.

I want to first express that it has been a pleasure to work alongside Mr. Adams and several Board members who I view as thoughtful, motivated and deeply committed to the mental health needs of our community. This is a decision that I have not come to lightly. I cannot continue to listen to the lies and the judgmental comments made by specific board members who have I have since learned have no understanding of mental health and/or addiction and who rely on bully tactics and untruths to make their points. If what I have seen is the way certain people act in a professional meeting with media present, I worry even more about what they are saying and doing behind closed doors. Finally, my resignation provides a resolution to my growing conflict between my fiduciary responsibility to the Board and my awareness that some of the actions of the Board were based on false and inaccurate information as described below.

Since being on the board, I have attended all but one “regular” meeting (when I had surgery), additional committee meetings, and several “special meetings”. I did not attend one of the “special meeting” called by the Chair, Ms. Malainy, reportedly to enter “executive session”. This was upon advice of my general counsel who opined that the meeting was likely a violation of ORC. In all of the meetings I have attended since my appointment, it is my opinion that this Board has accomplished almost nothing. While we have approved the “necessary” resolutions and grants (largely prepared by the office staff) to keep the board running, most of the time has been spent in the following:

- Listening to arguments about whether I should have been appointed (some board members believe that they should be given advance notice about who the state is considering) and how Mr. Adams supposedly was “stacking the deck” against the county appointees;
- Hearing various “charges” against Mr. Adams, ranging from insubordination for writing his book “without board approval” (which the board’s attorney dismissed as false) to frequent allegations that he “lied” to the Board or individual members (all also unfounded and I can provide you with documentation and recordings to support this);
- A Board member commenting that children cannot have mental health needs and that mental health providers should stop “indoctrinating” children and causing mental illnesses;
- Lectures about whether public schools should be permitted to a) require masks, b) talk about emotional issues, c) discuss anything related to sex or sexual orientation (with some members than suggesting that our board file lawsuits against the school board if we do not agree with their curriculum);
- Board members stating that “evidence-based treatment” is inappropriate, that the expertise of the mental health professionals is “meaningless” (after all, some say, they raised children/grandchildren and “know” about children), and that there were not mental health problems when “the men went to work and women stayed home”;
- Listening to board members rudely question agencies that come before the board and watching in embarrassment as several Board members giggled during public comments by a community member;
- Having Board members (including the Chair) insist that their advice is better than what our attorney provides;
- Watching our Chairwoman repeatedly violate rules and laws related to Executive Session and Open Meetings as well as the By-Laws of the Board itself and seeing her behave in ways that were unprofessional and embarrassing to the Board and entire community

These are only a few of the topics that have wasted Board (and staff) time and, as you certainly are aware, have been published in the media. Further, the ongoing actions of a specific group of county-appointed Board members (including the Chair) will now most likely result in significant financial cost to settle an active lawsuit filed by Mr. Adams against the Board and further degradation of any trust that the public had in this Board. This does not begin to consider the

potential loss in funding and services for the citizens of this county, funding and services that were attained largely as a result of Mr. Adams's knowledge of the grant process and the well-earned trusting mutual relationships that he had fostered with the state as well as county agencies and community providers.

I have recently learned additional information about some Board members that concerns me. Several were appointed by the County Commissioners specifically to remove Mr. Adams (with reports regarding the Commissioners' goal to "get rid" of him as early as 2014). There are media reports that at least two of these members have no reported interest or background in mental health/addiction and one is described as a member of an anti-Muslim "hate group". I have also been told that one county appointed member has told agencies that we fund that certain topics should not be included in their proposals or the Board would never fund them (such as any services related to LGBT individuals).

I am certain that you are aware of the various steps that were taken to attempt to remove Mr. Adams from his role as Executive Director, with the Board eventually voting to place Mr. Adams on "paid administrative leave" without reason being provided. (Note: that was the meeting I did not attend based on my counsel's advice.) It is my "non-legal" opinion that Ms. Malainy gave misleading and/or false information to the Board about Mr. Adams. Throughout spring 2022, members of the Board obtained more information regarding the accusations against Mr. Adams and had increasing concerns regarding the Board's and the Chair's lack of honesty/transparency. Attempts to question her in the May "special meeting" did not satisfy several members; Ms. Malainy eventually ran out of the meeting and threatened to call the Sheriff (all available on video in public media). After that meeting, Ms. Malainy's husband made inappropriate comments about a Board member on Facebook, stating that the Board member was "threatening her." The Chair then emailed the Board that she would require a sheriff's deputy to attend board meetings for her "safety".

At the regular meeting on June 15, 2022 (with a deputy attending) I was verbally attacked and insulted by a Board member primarily because I had contacted the Board's attorney (which I was previously told I had the right to do). A Board member called out the member's behavior as well as Ms. Malainy's husband's Facebook post although the Chair commented on neither nor offered any apology. Elections were to be completed at the June meeting according to Board By-Laws. All agreed that Ms. Malainy had not complied with the Bylaws so the Nominating Committee Chair she appointed (which happened to be the same person who insulted me) attempted to "extend" the current Chair's term. After much wasted time and posturing, the Chair finally allowed nominations from the floor and she was voted out. The 6 county appointees who have been most vocal about removing Mr. Adams all voted to have Ms. Malainy continue. Earlier in the month, Ms. Malainy reportedly requested that the County Commissioners reappoint the Board members who had terms expiring this year even when those Board members had not submitted applications. The Commissioners apparently did not seek and/or accept other applications.

I want to be very clear that I am not stating anything that I cannot substantiate. All information is available in public documents, including board minutes. I commend those members of the Board that have worked hard to make a change in the leadership so that perhaps some actual work can be done. That said, I remain skeptical that anything can be effectively accomplished until 1) there is a change in who the County Commissioners appoint to this Board, and 2) the Board is able to find a qualified individual who is willing to serve as Executive Director, a difficult task given the dysfunctional Board that currently exists.

I apologize for the length of this letter but I wanted to express my rationale for this resignation, my extreme sadness at not being able to serve what I consider is my community, and my commitment to consider applying in the future if and/or when I feel that my skills and expertise can be used without damaging my own health and my reputation.

Respectfully,



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CC: Emily Henry [Emily.Henry@mha.ohio.gov]
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