



Office of Representative John E. Barnes, Jr.

Thank you, Chair Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, Ranking Member Holmes, and my esteemed colleagues on the State and Local Government Committee for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on House Bill 675, which would expressly authorize municipal corporations to impose an unvoted property tax levy not exceeding one mill per dollar of taxable value for the purpose of funding a local Hope for a Smile Program.

We are still in the midst of the greatest economic downturn in the history of our nation. Some families do not have this, that or the other, and some families do not have the same opportunities as other families, and things such as dental care are not available to a lot of people, particularly children. We want to make sure that every child in Ohio who would like to have their teeth examined has an opportunity to do so. House Bill 675 would authorize a tax levy to support the Hope for a Smile Program, which would be established by House Bill 682.

I often speak of “at risk” factors, which contribute significantly as to why some of our children are not performing fully in the classroom. If a child cannot be comfortable in the classroom because of oral health problems, how do we expect them to achieve academic success? We are constantly striving to meet the goal of having our 21st century workforce to be the best equipped in the world, and achieving this begins in the classroom. The Hope for a Smile Program is in further pursuit of eradicating the “at risk” factors that plague our children’s education while providing an opportunity for our families.

The Hope for a Smile Program services are targeted at those who are indigent and uninsured. The program will be a collaboration between the Ohio Department of Health, dental and dental hygiene academic programs, and professional associations. Under the program, the ODH Director, with assistance from the Director of Administrative Services, must obtain three buses equipped as mobile dental units. Each bus will be assigned to one region of Ohio (northern, central, or southern) and staffed by dental professionals and faculty, staff, and students of dental and dental hygiene academic programs. Each bus will travel to schools within its designated region, with priority given to schools with a high population of indigent or uninsured children.

A municipal corporation that has established and operates a Hope for a Smile Program may do any of the following:

1. Apply on the program's behalf to the Department of Medicaid for a Medicaid provider agreement;
2. Arrange with private entities that provide health care insurance or other forms of health care coverage in this state for reimbursement from them for services provided to children who have health care insurance or coverage through those entities. The director of health shall assist the municipal corporation in complying with this division upon the municipal corporation's request;
3. Seek payments from the Medicaid program for services provided to children who are Medicaid recipients;
4. Seek reimbursement from private entities that provide health care insurance or other forms of health care coverage for services provided to children who have insurance or coverage through those; and
5. Apply for money allocated by the United States Department of Labor or other entities for workforce or economic development initiatives.

The Hope for a Smile program will begin building the process of a better tomorrow while providing our families with an opportunity that will contribute significantly to eradicating the “at risk” factors that plague our children’s education. Thank you again for this opportunity, I would be happy to answer any questions.