



Ohio House Finance Committee
Sub. HB 166, Biennial Operating Budget FY 2020-2021

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Communities In Schools of Central Ohio
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Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Substitute House Bill 166, the State Operating Budget. I am Amy Gordon, Executive Director of Communities In Schools of Central Ohio.

I am here to request your support of Communities In Schools of Central Ohio (CIS) in providing integrated student supports for at-risk youth for improved social and emotional learning (SEL) needs, which directly impact chronic absenteeism and dropout rates. We have a budget amendment pending before your Committee that would earmark \$300,000 in each fiscal year within Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' TANF Block Grant appropriation item, for Communities in Schools of Central Ohio to provide supports for at-risk youth.

Communities In Schools operates in 24 schools throughout central Ohio to serve students at-risk of chronic absenteeism and dropping out, and is planning to expand to other high-need school districts across the state. The CIS model works with students at every level of their education, providing resources and support to keep them on track, all the way to graduation. We support children who come to school hungry, homeless, without adequate clothing and often dealing with unimaginable trauma due to violence in their home and neighborhood. Statistics show that many of these children are not able to get to school regularly or to focus on their schoolwork when they are there. The CIS model provides student supports to address barriers, chronic absenteeism and, consequently, dropout rates. The CIS case management model works with approximately 10% of the partner schools' student population affect outcomes in student attendance, behavior, and core academics. The CIS program has a record of demonstrated effectiveness in combating the chronic absenteeism affecting central Ohio schools.

The CIS evidenced-based model employs an innovative, holistic approach to addressing both the academic and nonacademic needs of children, working with the highest-risk populations to help students succeed. **In the 2017-2018 school year alone, CIS impacted over 11,000 students, including over 1,400 case-managed students, and had a 95% grade-promotion rate with 96% of CIS seniors graduating or receiving a GED. Also in the 2017-2018 school year, out of the CIS students with a specific attendance goal, 85% met or made progress in their attendance goal area.**

Ohio's chronic absentee rate is currently 16.4%¹, and the state has a four-year graduation rate of 60%², demonstrating a need for further intervention to keep students on course for timely graduation. Chronic absenteeism is defined as an individual absence rate of 10% or more during an academic year and is a leading

¹ <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Chronic-Absenteeism/Ohio-s-Resource-Guide-to-Reduce-Chronic-Absenteeism.pdf.aspx>

² <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Graduation-Rate-Component>

contributing factor for dropping out of school.³ By sixth grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Attendance is impacted by multiple issues; however, the problem is particularly acute for students who face the most significant barriers, including students from low-income families, students of color, and students with disabilities. The resulting dropout rates impact society broadly: nationally, 63.2% of high school dropouts are not currently in the workforce⁴, and the negative effects on families and communities are incalculable.

The youth we serve with the CIS programs are all at-risk, TANF-eligible youth who need our help addressing challenges in their lives that prevent them from getting to school or from learning once they are there. Our CIS programs are intentional and flexible to address the individual needs of youth and families and have proven results.

We are assisting needy families as the TANF program intends, and this is our first request of the state for an investment that will help diversify our funding sources, leverage private and community dollars, and allow for expansion to other high-need schools.

By ensuring that children at highest risk of dropping out of school complete school, we are working effectively to end the cycle of poverty and dependence on welfare. Education is vital to securing a meaningful, quality job. Our program plays an integral role in connecting all the dots that shape educational success that in turn shapes job opportunity and career success.

With an investment by your Committee in our program, CIS will continue to provide our impactful programs to the at-risk youth who need our support, and to expand to other high-need schools and communities.

I am happy to address any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

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³ <https://www.attendanceworks.org/absences-add-up/>

⁴ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/figures/fig_24.asp?referrer=figures