

The Ohio House of Representative  
Health Committee  
Representative Derrick Merrin, Chair

HOUSE BILL 12  
PROPONENT WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony on House Bill 12 and the creation of the Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group.

My name is John Duby, and I am a developmental-behavioral pediatrician, but I also have the privilege of serving as the Professor and Chair, Department of Pediatrics for Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine and as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Community Health for Dayton Children's Hospital. All of us who care for children join in applauding the leadership Governor DeWine, Speaker Householder and Representatives Manning and West have shown in working to address this critical issue facing Ohio's children.

The data is clear, Ohio's kids are struggling. The incidence of anxiety and depression among children, adolescents and young adults have increased significantly here in Ohio and throughout the country over the past 10 years. Ohio ranks among the top five states for the incidence of Adverse Childhood Experiences, which are early traumas that can impact the long-term health, wellbeing, and success of our young people. Children with physical and mental health problems have lower educational achievement and greater involvement with the criminal justice system.

Here at Dayton Children's Hospital, we have seen a 200% increase over five years in the number of kids coming to the emergency room for mental health-related issues and a 300% increase in the number of children being admitted for mental health problems. In 2018, 7.4 percent of teens in the U.S. said they tried to kill themselves in the past 12 months. For LGBTQ teens that number was 35 percent. Sadly, our regional numbers mirror national trends.

We must take steps now to change these trends for our children. The research also shows that preventing mental health disorders is cost-effective, and effective, particularly when it is focused on young children who are in the formative stages of social, emotional, and behavioral development.

We know we can impact these trends with the right interventions. In fact, at Dayton Children's, as a preventative and precautionary strategy, we are now screening every child 10 or older who comes through our emergency department for suicide risk. While we are one of only a small number of pediatric hospitals taking this step today, it is becoming more of the standard.

Certainly, there are many great programs and strategies that are working, yet creating a comprehensive learning network will provide a much-needed foundation to find the best practice approaches to equip children with skills that facilitate emotional and behavioral self-regulation as well as support parents in maintaining their own mental health so that they can be fully available to meet their children's needs.

If we provide the right care and support, children fare better in all aspects - at home, in schools, and in their communities. We ask that you help us build and sustain strong and supportive networks to ensure that all of Ohio's children are healthy and successful and pass House Bill 12.

We are eager to assist you and work with the Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group and develop a plan to create a comprehensive learning network to support children and families to improve the social, emotional, and behavioral development of Ohio's children.

Again, thank you Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Health Committee, for this opportunity to share our views on the need for the Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group.

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