



The Ohio School Counselor Association

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Proponent Testimony on HB 12
June 4, 2019

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share the Ohio School Counselor Association (OSCA)'s support for House Bill 12, priority legislation that would establish the Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group. My name is Nichole Miller and I serve as the President of OSCA.

OSCA is incredibly heartened by House Leadership's commitment through HB 12 to prioritize the social, emotional and behavioral health needs of our youth. School counselors know firsthand that these needs are far too great. As experts in social emotional learning who are also charged with supporting students' academic and career advancement, school counselors recognize that student success requires supporting the whole child. Only through a holistic approach to student health can we address all the personal and environmental factors that impact a student's ability to make progress in learning and personal development. Fully integrated learning supports like behavioral, mental health and social services are key to creating safe and successful schools. A child suffering from overlooked social anxiety or untreated mental health issues cannot be fully prepared to perform in the classroom. In addition, educating students on social emotional learning (SEL) has been proven to promote positive development and create a strong foundation for overall mental wellbeing and success. OSCA supports HB 12's intent to identify best practices and proven mechanisms in this realm to support students' social emotional development.

Unfortunately, the cost of continuing to ignore mental health, especially the unaddressed childhood trauma that can create so many emotional and behavioral complications, is incredibly expensive. According to a 2012 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the lifetime costs associated with just one year of child maltreatment (physical or psychological abuse) reaches a staggering \$124 billion.¹ We owe it to our students to initiate a comprehensive, statewide effort like the one outlined in HB 12 to better support our children's social and emotional health.

Finally, OSCA encourages this body to consider the value school counselors can provide as educated, trained experts in mental and behavioral health who already have daily access to youth in schools. Often we spend the majority of our time proctoring tests or monitoring lunch, neither of which are duties related to our direct emotional and behavioral health training. With the need

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. "Child abuse and neglect cost the United States \$124 billion" CDC.gov. February 1, 2012. Accessed May 29, 2019. https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2012/p0201_child_abuse.html

so great for mental health supports, school counselors should have caseloads that allow them to better identify and meet student needs. Ensuring school counselors are available to students and doing the social, emotional and behavioral health work that our education prepares us to do will optimize our ability to contribute to the effort outlined in HB 12. We stand ready to apply our expertise to supporting the proposed Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group, and all other initiatives that strive to improve outcomes for the students we care so deeply about.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 12 and I would welcome any questions you may have.