

Testimony of Catherine Romanos, MD, FAAFP
in Support of House Bill 165
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I am a family physician who lives and works in Columbus, Ohio. I completed a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish literature at New York University, received my medical degree from the University of Connecticut, and completed a residency in family medicine with an emphasis on social justice and caring for underserved Spanish-speaking patients at the Lawrence Family Medicine Residency Program in Lawrence, Massachusetts. I am board certified in family medicine. As a physician, I wholeheartedly support House Bill (HB) 165. The National Health Education Standards were first introduced almost 25 years ago and Ohio is the only state in the country that has not adopted them. These are not controversial or radical. In fact, Ohio has been remiss in neglecting to adopt these basic standards for so long.

As a family doctor, I see patients of all ages, cradle to grave, as they say. This gives me a unique window in to circumstances that affect one's health throughout the lifespan. Issues like diet, body image, puberty, and disease prevention are only the beginning of learning to be a healthy adult. These national standards go even further to include healthy modes of communication, how to interact with technology, how to evaluate evidence, and one that I find most important is how to make informed and healthy decisions.

Often times when I encounter a young person struggling with health issues or just issues of adolescence, my first recommendation is for that young person to talk with the adults in their life about what is happening. A young person struggling with weight or body image is best served by having parents or guardians who are aware of the issues and

supportive of healthy efforts. Too often though, I find that the adults in the room are no better informed on issues of health and safety than the children.

According to CDC data from 2015-16, one in five school age children and young people are obese. Take a young mother of an overweight 6-year-old boy. That mother will want to do everything in her power to help her son grow strong and healthy and avoid obesity and the long-term negative health consequences like diabetes, mobility problems, and heart disease. However if that mom was a product of our Ohio public schools, we cannot be sure that she herself ever learned what she needs to know to help her son. Choosing healthy options and lifestyle modifications is something that all adults should know, but don't necessarily. Educating children and young adults in Ohio is an investment in not just those children, but generations of Ohioans to come.

As a family doctor, one of my favorite parts of the National Health Education Standards is the focus on a healthy decision making process. As Ohio and our neighboring states scramble to get ahead of the opiate epidemic, our young people are being faced with new and scary challenges every day. What do you do when you see violence? What do you do when you see someone close to you making bad decisions? How do you help people around you who are suffering? How do use your voice to keep yourself safe? These daily decisions are challenging our young people now and I think that one of the things we must do to get past this horrible epidemic is equip our young people with tools to make good decisions. These standards address this specifically.

There are schools in Ohio that are already complying with these standards and providing high quality, well-rounded health education. Adding this standard to our state will bring us in line with the rest of the country and make a statement that we are putting

the health and safety of all of our citizens, young people especially, first and foremost.

As a physician I urge you to vote yes on HB 165.