



## State Representatives Tom Brinkman, Jr. & Brigid Kelly

27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> House Districts of Ohio  
Sponsor Testimony - HB 532

Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson, and member of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity for us to provide Sponsor testimony on House Bill 532.

This legislation would require the State Board of Education to adopt standards for mental health education allowing school districts to permissively include these standards in their K through 12 curriculum. The curriculum would be age appropriate and designed based on the needs of local school districts.

According to the Ohio Department of Health, in 2016, the youth suicide rate in Hamilton County was the highest it had been in 20 years. Furthermore, in 2018, suicide was the leading cause of death among Ohioans age 10-14 and the second leading cause among Ohioans age 15-34. As 1 in 5 children have, or will have, a mental illness, it is vital that we reach out to students with information of signs and symptoms regarding mental health issues they might see within themselves or their peers.

During this current COVID-19 crisis, the number of individuals struggling with mental health conditions are escalating. Social isolation combined with the uncertainty regarding jobs, the economy, and family health create an environment where it is potentially more important now than ever to be aware and be educated when it comes to mental illness.

In an effort to maintain Ohio's long tradition of home rule, we acknowledge that this curriculum will look differently in every school and community. Because of this, our bill only outlines what standards *may* be addressed by the Ohio School Board, and therefore, permissively adopted by local school districts.

With the passage of our most recent budget, it is evident that Ohio is devoted to addressing this issue. The statistics that my colleague mentioned earlier are not simply numbers without purpose. Those affected by mental illness are our family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. By providing mental health education every year of a child's schooling, we are ensuring they have resources and knowledge needed to achieve mental wellness.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. We are happy to answer your questions.