



Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
HB 166, Biennial Operating Budget FY 2020-2021

Amy Gordon, LSW, Executive Director and CEO
Communities In Schools of Central Ohio
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Good morning, Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West and members of the subcommittee. I am Amy Gordon, Executive Director of Communities In Schools of Central Ohio, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify before your subcommittee today.

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 subcommittee that would set-aside \$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. The CIS model provides integrated student supports that involve three integral categories: peer networking, data and analytics, and case management (as recommended by the Ohio Department of Education)¹ to address chronic absenteeism and, consequently, dropout rates. The CIS case management model aims to work with 10% of the partnership schools' student population (5% if school enrollment is over 1,000 students) to 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 students, 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.**

¹ <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Research-Evaluation-and-Advanced-Analytics/Proving-Ground>

Ohio's chronic absentee rate is currently 16.4%², and the state has a four-year graduation rate of 60%³, 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 contributing factor for dropping out of school.⁴ 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 workforce⁵, and the negative effects on families and communities are incalculable.

In December 2016, the Ohio General Assembly passed House Bill 410 to encourage and support a preventative approach to excessive absences and truancy. Subsequently, the Ohio Department of Education produced a resource guide for school districts: *Ohio's Resource Guide to Reduce Chronic Absenteeism – Getting Ohio's Students to School Every Day*.⁶ The Resource Guide points out that often, non-academic barriers keep students from attending school every day, therefore by systematically incorporating student supports into district and school improvement activities, many of these barriers can be addressed before they keep Ohio's students out of the classroom. Integrated student supports are defined as supports that focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement to improve student learning, increase student attendance, build stronger families, and develop healthier communities. Communities In Schools is referenced in this report as a resource for Ohio's educators.

With an investment by your subcommittee 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 would now like to introduce to you Eboney Eldridge, the Communities In Schools Program Manager, and ask her to share some of her personal experience as a leader at CIS. After that, we are happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Gordon, Executive Director and CEO
Communities In Schools of Central Ohio
6500 Busch Blvd. Suite 105
Columbus, Ohio 43229
614-268-2472
www.ciskids.org

² <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Chronic-Absenteeism/Ohio-s-Resource-Guide-to-Reduce-Chronic-Absenteeism.pdf.aspx>

³ <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Graduation-Rate-Component>

⁴ <https://www.attendanceworks.org/absences-add-up/>

⁵ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/figures/fig_24.asp?referrer=figures

⁶ <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Chronic-Absenteeism/Ohio-s-Resource-Guide-to-Reduce-Chronic-Absenteeism.pdf.aspx>