



Ohio Chapter

Testimony of Bill Cotton, MD, FAAP
Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
House Bill 166—State Operating Budget for FY20/21
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Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West, and Members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 166. My name is Dr. Bill Cotton and I serve as the advocacy co-chair for the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

I want to touch briefly on several items in HB 166 that we support. Overall, we are excited about the many new child health investments being proposed in the budget. Our children are our greatest resource and Ohio pediatricians stand ready to ensure that these investments have a significant impact.

Our members are very excited by Governor DeWine's proposal to raise the age of purchase for tobacco and vapor products to twenty-one. Pediatricians nationwide are alarmed by the rise in e-cigarette use by children. According to data from 2018, 21% of high school students and 5% of middle school students reported having used an e-cigarette within a month of the survey; this is a 78% increase from the previous year. Children are often attracted to e-cigarettes due to the enticing candy or fruit flavors and attractive designs. Many children and adults also perceive that e-cigarettes are less harmful than traditional tobacco products.

Age of purchase laws have been shown to reduce youth smoking rates and have been adopted by a number of other states and Ohio communities. Raising the purchase age for all tobacco and nicotine products is an important intervention that will help curb the rise in smoking among teenagers. I am aware that the American Cancer Society and American Heart Association are working on an amendment that would strengthen the enforcement of this new age of purchase standard. The Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics supports their efforts.

Our members are also supportive of language in House Bill 166 that would require health plans to cover telehealth services in a similar manner to in person health care services. Telehealth is critical to addressing access issues across Ohio and we are very supportive of parity coverage. On this note, we are also supportive of Ohio Department of Medicaid efforts to broaden telehealth coverage within the Medicaid program.

We are also supportive of new investments and tax changes in the budget aimed at addressing lead exposure in Ohio. This is a major public health concern for Ohio children and we feel new funding for lead prevention activities at the Ohio Departments of Health and Medicaid as well as the proposed lead abatement tax credit will have an immediate and positive impact.

House Bill 166 includes several increases in funding for the Ohio Department of Health's Bureau of Children with Medical Handicaps and *Help Me Grow* Program, Early Intervention Services at the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and Student Wellness and Success funds at the Ohio Department of Education. These and other child health investments in HB 166 are critical and it is my hope that these funds can be preserved.

In closing, I appreciate the subcommittee's detailed review of HB 166 and your focus on child health. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have, thank you for your time.