



**Ohio Association of Community Health Centers
House Bill 12, Proponent Testimony
Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
November 13, 2019**

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman and Ranking Minority Member Antonio, thank you for the opportunity to provide written, proponent testimony on House Bill 12, creating the Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Network Stakeholder Group.

The Ohio Association of Community Health Centers (OACHC) represents all of Ohio's 55 Federally Qualified Health Centers and FQHC Look-Alikes (more commonly referred to as Community Health Centers), providing care to more than 800,000 Ohioans across 378+ healthcare delivery sites spread throughout the state. Community Health Centers are non-profit health care providers that deliver affordable, quality comprehensive primary care to medically underserved populations, regardless of insurance status.

For more than 50 years, Community Health Centers have provided integrated whole person care for the entire life span, often times providing **dental, behavioral, pharmacy, vision and other needed supplemental services under one roof**. While each is distinct, they share one common purpose: to provide primary health care services that are coordinated, culturally and linguistically competent and community directed. Community Health Centers utilize social determinants of health tools to collect and apply data to better understand their patients, including screening for areas such as suicide, domestic violence, guns in the homes, and safe communities for all ages.

We applaud sponsors, Representatives Manning and West, for prioritizing young children and their families' physical and mental health. We support HB 12 and its focus on reducing behavioral health disparities among young children. **We appreciate being named as a member of Ohio Children's Behavioral Health Prevention Stakeholder Group and look forward to working with the legislature and Administration to reduce behavioral health disparities.**

Community Health Centers are tasked to meet the needs of their communities and it is evident by the increase in suicide rates and chronic disease of addiction that behavioral health is a growing need. As a result and as Health Centers strive to meet community need, from 2013 to 2018, licensed behavioral health providers working in Community Health Centers has increased 714%.

Additionally, across the state, over fifty percent of Ohio's School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) are sponsored by an FQHC (like the nationally recognized Oylar SBHC in Cincinnati), providing continuity for the child(ren) and the entire family, 365 days a year. Our members understand how vital prevention is in treating health care needs before it becomes critical. Community Health Centers are on the front lines and see the demand for additional prevention and investments in quality health care for Ohio's families.

On behalf of Ohio's Community Health Centers and the patients and communities so well served, thank you for the opportunity to provide support for House Bill 12. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please contact Julie DiRossi-King at (614) 884-3101 or jdirossi@ohiochc.org.