



February 19, 2020

Dave Burke, Chairman
Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee
The Ohio Senate

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the committee:

At the Lorain County Metro Parks, we pride ourselves on being a family-friendly, safe place for residents in our community. We support the physical and mental well-being of our visitors. In recent years, we have trained our staff in suicide prevention and provide mental health resources including the Crisis Text Line throughout the parks. We are writing to support Senate Bill 126, specifically the proposed language changes that expands Ohio Revised Code 5122.04 to include children under the age 14.

This language change will help us protect children in our care or in our parks. We want to have safe options available in the event a child experiences a psychiatric crisis while participating in our youth programming. Additionally, this language will allow us to properly assist a child found alone and in distress at a park or play space, or if a younger child reveals to a park ranger that they are thinking about suicide.

Suicide is now the leading cause of death among Ohioans ages 10 to 14.

We support expanding Ohio Revised Code 5122.04 to allow for children younger than 14 who may be suicidal to receive a crisis risk assessment, even if parents are not immediately available to provide consent. The child's safety and well-being can be assessed by a professional while they continue to make a good-faith effort to connect with the parent or guardian.

We cannot wait to respond to a child in crisis. Senate Bill 126 updates Ohio Revised Code to make it possible to save younger lives.

Thank you for helping us support our visitors of all ages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James E. Ziemnik".

James E. Ziemnik
Director/Secretary
Lorain County Metro Parks

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