



Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

Written Testimony on SB 126

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Chairman Burke, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health and Medicaid Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 126. My name is Liz Henrich and I am the Associate CEO of the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities. We represent Ohio's Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Boards.

I am writing in support of the provisions in Senate Bill 126 that allow mental health professionals, under defined circumstances when parental consent is unavailable, to administer a crisis assessment to a child under the age of 14.

The changes proposed in this bill would authorize a mental health professional to provide a crisis assessment to a minor without parent/guardian consent under specific circumstances. Current law states that children 14 and older may undergo a crisis assessment without parental or guardian consent, but the current statute does not provide a similar option for children 13 and under. During a time of crisis, when an assessment may be necessary to support a child's wellbeing, a parent or guardian may be unreachable. This change in law would allow a mental health professional to administer the crisis assessment for a child under the age of 14 without the prior consent of a parent or guardian.

The bill's language provides clarity for mental health professionals and others about the circumstances in which this authority can be utilized and the responsibility the mental health professional has to make a good faith effort to notify the parent or guardian that the assessment was provided.

Communities are seeing an increasing number of younger children in need of crisis assessments along with crisis and ongoing services. We believe that this proposed change is an appropriate update to Ohio law to ensure that mental health professionals are able to respond to a crisis when a child may be suicidal or may pose a risk of physical harm to others. We are supportive of the bill's proposed changes to Ohio Revised Code 5122 and 5164.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that Ohio's children are able to access to mental health and addiction services and supports when and where they need them. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (614)224-1111 or ehenrich@oacbha.org.