

**As Introduced**

**133rd General Assembly  
Regular Session  
2019-2020**

**H. B. No. 646**

**Representative Howse**

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**A BILL**

To require the Director of Health to establish and 1  
operate a pilot program to provide individual, 2  
problem-solving therapy sessions and related 3  
family support services to youth and young 4  
adults in Cleveland who are at a high risk for 5  
gun violence. 6

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:**

**Section 1.** As used in this act: 7

(A) "Certified community health worker" has the same 8  
meaning as in section 4723.01 of the Revised Code. 9

(B) "Federally qualified health center" and "federally 10  
qualified health center look-alike" have the same meanings as in 11  
section 3701.047 of the Revised Code. 12

**Section 2.** (A) The Director of Health shall establish and 13  
operate a pilot program that is based on the Friendship Bench 14  
Program, a mental health intervention program in Mbare, Harare, 15  
Zimbabwe. Under the program, specially trained certified 16  
community health workers shall provide individual, problem- 17  
solving therapy sessions to youth and young adults residing in 18  
Cleveland, Ohio, who are at a high risk for gun violence. The 19

certified community health workers also shall provide support 20  
services to families of the youth and young adults who 21  
participate in the therapy sessions. 22

The provision of therapy sessions to patients, and support 23  
services to their families, shall begin not later than October 24  
1, 2021, and conclude on September 30, 2023. The sessions and 25  
support services shall be provided in pediatrician practices, 26  
primary care practices and clinics, federally qualified health 27  
centers, and federally qualified health center look-alikes that 28  
are selected by the Director of Health in accordance with 29  
division (B) of this section. The Director shall determine the 30  
maximum number of therapy sessions in which a patient may 31  
participate. 32

(B) Not later than June 1, 2021, the Director shall 33  
identify and invite pediatrician practices, primary care 34  
practices and clinics, federally qualified health centers, and 35  
federally qualified health center look-alikes to participate in 36  
the pilot program. After consultation with the Cleveland 37  
Division of Police, the Director shall invite to participate in 38  
the pilot program those practices, clinics, and centers that 39  
serve a significant percentage of youth and young adults who 40  
reside in Cleveland neighborhoods with the highest risk of gun 41  
violence and have space to accommodate the therapy sessions for 42  
patients and support services for families. From those that 43  
accept the invitation, the Director shall select the practices, 44  
clinics, and centers to participate based on their willingness 45  
to comply with the rules adopted under division (E) of this 46  
section. 47

(C) The Director shall recruit certified community health 48  
workers to participate in the pilot program. If the Director 49

requests, the Board of Nursing shall assist the Director in 50  
identifying and contacting certified community health worker 51  
training programs that could assist with the recruitment effort. 52

(D) The Director shall develop a Friendship Bench 53  
curriculum that staff of the Department of Health and Cleveland 54  
Department of Public Health shall use to train certified 55  
community health workers who are recruited to participate in the 56  
pilot program under division (C) of this section. In developing 57  
the curriculum, the Director shall use the resources and tools 58  
from the web site of the Friendship Bench Program, 59  
[www.friendshipbenchzimbabwe.org](http://www.friendshipbenchzimbabwe.org), and also may consult with the 60  
Program's operators as well as other individuals or entities 61  
that are familiar with the Program. 62

(E) The Director shall adopt rules under section 111.15 of 63  
the Revised Code to implement the program. 64

(F) Not later than December 31, 2023, the Director shall 65  
submit a written report to the Governor and General Assembly 66  
that summarizes the data that has been collected on the pilot 67  
program during its operation; evaluates the pilot program's 68  
success in reducing gun violence among the youth, young adults, 69  
and families served by the program; makes recommendations 70  
regarding continuation or expansion of the program; and provides 71  
any other information the Director considers appropriate for 72  
inclusion in the report. The Director shall submit the report to 73  
the General Assembly in accordance with section 101.68 of the 74  
Revised Code. 75