



Representative West
Sponsor Testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 25
House Health Committee

Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Health Committee - thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Concurrent Resolution 25. This resolution urges the Governor to declare a state of emergency on childhood trauma.

The American Academy of Pediatrics defines adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, as stressful or traumatic events that occur during childhood and are strongly related to a wide range of health problems, including obesity, heart disease, alcoholism, and drug use.

According to the 2017-2018 National Survey of Children's Health, almost 600,000 Ohio children reported facing at least two adverse experiences. This is a staggering number and a testament to the sheer quantity of traumatic experiences our children are facing every day. We know that half of all lifetime mental illnesses begin by age 14, and so we must do something to catch the signs and focus on preventing more serious issues down the line.

We also know that ACEs are more common in communities of color and that our children in those communities face greater barriers. To that end, the American Psychological Association recognizes that racism is another cause of childhood trauma. It is crucial that we make this evidence-based distinction and keep in mind that while children of all backgrounds are affected, Black children and other of color face these experiences at higher rates.

We see it in our neighborhoods, our classrooms, and everywhere in between – our children are suffering from what is happening around them, and the consequences are devastating. I've seen it from my 25 years as a mental health professional, much of which I spent working directly with our youth.

The time is now to raise awareness of how destructive childhood trauma is and to treat the issue like the crisis it is. That is why Rep. Upchurch and I are introducing this resolution. By calling more attention to childhood trauma, we sincerely hope that we can better inform the public on the severe consequences of trauma on children's development, the importance of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive care, and how minority communities have been particularly affected by trauma.

The legislature, in partnership with the DeWine administration, has already stepped up to provide more resources for our children's education and behavioral health needs. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done to ensure happier, healthier and trauma-free lives for Ohio's children. We must give them the opportunities they need to thrive, not just survive.

I would now like to turn it over to my joint sponsor, Rep. Upchurch. After his remarks, we will be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.