

Local Matters

PARTNERING for HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee

Representative Louis W. Blessing III, Chair

Representative Don Jones, Vice Chair

Representative Phillip M. Robinson, Jr., Ranking Member

Proponent Testimony on House Bill 165

Regards adoption of health education standards

Sarah Miller, Local Matters

June 4, 2019

Good evening, Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Jones, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the committee. My name is Sarah Miller and I am here today on behalf of Local Matters to testify in support of House Bill 165, regarding adoption of health education standards.

Local Matters is a nonprofit based in Central Ohio that works to build healthy communities through food education, access, and advocacy. Our programming reaches over 22,000 children and families each year with hands-on learning about how to access and prepare healthy, affordable food.

Local Matters' work is rooted in the knowledge that Ohio's families are facing a health crisis. Rates of chronic, diet-related disease have spiked. In Ohio today, over 33% of children have enough excess weight to put them at risk of developing early-onset diabetes and other diet-related disease.¹ That means 1 in 3 of our children will likely spend their lives dealing with often preventable diagnoses. The emotional and economic toll this will take on them, their families, and on our state budget is immeasurable.

Ohio's health crisis is not the fault of any one entity. However, as we look toward the future and prepare our children to be the next generation of leaders, it is the responsibility of us all – corporations, nonprofits, and government – to set our children up for success.

Local Matters sees the establishment of state-wide health education standards as a necessary component of our broader goal to give Ohio's children the knowledge and tools they need to be healthy, contributing members of our workforce, our military, and our community. House Bill 165 would empower the State Board of Education to play their part by using their expertise to change the fact that Ohio is currently the only state without health education standards.

¹ Trust for America's Health & Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2017). Ohio State Obesity Data, Rates and Trends. *The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America*. Retrieved June 5, 2018, from <https://stateofobesity.org/states/oh/>.

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When I connect with Local Matters' program participants to learn about their experiences around food and health, it becomes ever clearer why we must create opportunities for equitable, robust health education.

Earlier this year, I sat down with a third grader and his mom to hear about what he's learned in one of our school-based programs. He was full of energy and happily rattled off all the various lessons he's learned – from what the USDA myPlate chart recommends he eat, to what vitamins come from which foods and how they help him grow.

The third grader's mom then shared her insight. Her son, she said, has started asking why their family eats the foods they do. He asks for more vegetables and fruits at the grocery. He double checks their bread is whole grain. In other words, her son has started advocating for his family's health.

How is this relevant to House Bill 165? Standard eight of the National Health Education Standards is: "Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health."² If given the opportunity to establish health education standards for Ohio's students, the State Board of Education could build the foundation for every child to have the same experience as this third grader – to know and act on healthy choices, leading to a healthier life less inhibited by preventable diet-related disease.

Last November, I became a new aunt. When I hold my nephew, this seemingly technical issue around health education standards comes into a new, very personal light. I ask you all today to think about your own children, your friends' children, and your constituents' children. Are they being provided with the best possible chance to build the skills and knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their health?

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony submitted by:

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Local Matters is at 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Central Ohio working to build healthy communities through food education, access, and advocacy.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). National Health Education Standards. *CDC Healthy Schools*. Retrieved June 2, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm>.