

Testimony of Michelle Cotterman, RN

Oppose Senate Bill 121

Education Committee

*October 29, 2019*

Madam Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and Members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity today to express my opposition to SB121.

My name is Michelle Cotterman, I am a registered nurse but most importantly I am a mother of two beautiful and healthy school age students. We take health and wellness very seriously in my family and it is a topic of discussion almost every day of the week. I have been closely following the discussion surrounding this bill. I am opposed to SB 121 for multiple reasons but I will address here my top objections and most burning questions.

During proponent testimony it became very clear that there is nothing currently stopping local school districts from establishing health standards and writing health curriculum except for the lack of support and professional development needed to write such standards and curriculum. An argument was proposed that we need statewide adoption of health standards that can apply across the board yet it was also stated that districts do not have to adopt the standards, it is simply another option. How does the adoption of an optional health standard address the support and professional development issues currently affecting local districts?

During proponent testimony there was a lot of talk about pre-diabetes, diabetes, and obesity particularly amongst persons of low socio-economic status. Senator Brenner asked an excellent question regarding what has changed between now and 30 years ago when we didn't have health standards and we didn't have the issues of diabetes and obesity. The simple answer was "diet". I completely agree with the need for comprehensive nutritional education that is necessary to prevent chronic disease but nutrition is already a component of required curriculum and as stated above not fully utilized due to lack of support. Since Ohio is the only state in the nation without these health standards, are we the only state in the nation dealing with epidemics of diabetes and obesity? Has there been any evidence submitted that proves adopting these optional standards will statistically lower the burden of diabetes and obesity? How can health standards fix an issue that is related to the access of quality food sources?

According to the bill analysis "current law requires the passage of a concurrent resolution by both houses of the General Assembly before the State Board may add or revise any standards or curriculum for health education. Prior to voting on the adoption of the concurrent resolution, the standing committee of each house must hold at least one public hearing." This bill removes

that requirement. It appears that is the true intention behind this legislation; To remove the legislative process and, therefore, public involvement which is designed as a check and balance to prevent special interest groups from adding health curriculum that may not be in the best interest of Ohio citizens. What is the true purpose of this legislation?

In summary, ORC3313.60 designates required health curriculum including: nutritive value of foods, harmful effects of drugs of abuse, alcoholic beverages, and tobacco, venereal disease education, personal safety and assault prevention, dating violence prevention, prescription opioid abuse prevention, physical education, first aid, including a training program in CPR. Teacher's need support and professional development to fully teach the already required health curriculum and not a new law creating just another option. Children need access to high quality food, which includes the food they receive while at school. What they don't need is more boxed education, standardized tests, and desk time. I agree with the current Ohio required curriculum on health, I agree with the process for adding curriculum, and I ask that you oppose SB121.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and I am happy to answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability.