



Representative Susan Manchester
Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 367
December 7, 2020

Good morning Chairwoman Lehner, Vice-Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 367, which will require the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to create an official job description for school counselors, based on the current ODE standards. This legislation is supported by both the Ohio School Counselor Association (OSCA) and Ohio Education Association (OEA).

All too often, we hear how school counselors are not accessible because they are performing administrative and operational tasks, such as monitoring lunch and proctoring tests. This underutilization of school counselors prevents them from effectively addressing the social, emotional and behavioral health needs of our students. This summer, the legislature passed the state biennial budget, which included \$675 million to support our students through mental health counseling, wraparound services, mentoring and after-school programs. With the spotlight now focused on addressing and caring for the mental health of our students, it is imperative to ensure schools utilize their resources available to students.

By requiring ODE to create an official job description for school counselors, we are encouraging a more effective use of the in-house resources and expertise that are already present within our schools. Our legislation does not mandate the use of the official ODE job description, but rather asks that local districts, community schools and STEM schools consider this definition when crafting local school counselor job descriptions or assigning duties to their school counselors. This will allow for a better utilization of our school counselors, and enable them to more effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of students. Additionally, the bill will ask ODE to designate at least one school counselor liaison within the department to help school counselors cut through red tape and better serve our school districts.

I am grateful to Representative Miranda for her partnership on this important legislation and look forward to answering any questions. Thank you.