

Written Testimony of Luis R Vizcarrondo Jr

State of Ohio Senate Subcommittee on Finance - Health and Medicaid

Thursday, May 16th, 2019 9:00 A.M.

Good morning, Chairman Hackett, and members of the Subcommittee:

It is a privilege to come before you today. I regret that I come before this Subcommittee at a time when many of our children, teens, and young adults are lost to senseless attacks of bullying or suicide. Most of all this loss could have been prevented by providing the much-needed resources, specifically resources of mental health and holistic treatment being on site available to the schools. My prayers and thoughts today are with those families who have lost sons, daughters, father, mothers, and so many others to mental health or bullying. As many of you know, the issue of bullying and mental health have become a trend to often heard of in today's society. Unfortunately, some don't look to this issue until it truly hits home. As a young pastor in the State of Ohio and being a member of other community organizations that represent more than over a hundred other clergy and community leaders. We are to often confronted with the issue that schools either don't have adequate resources to attend to the pupils coming into the schools or school boards do not really enforce their policies to the extent they should. I attended Cleveland schools all my life and unfortunately, had the experience of confronting many issues which included bullying. I had everything from my lunch money being stolen, being sexually molested, attacked because of my faith, physically & verbally abused by my peers, see some of my closest friends attempt suicide due to mental health, and much more. Although bullying has existed for many years, it has become more prevalent in today's society than ever. I myself dealt with much anxiety and depression growing up due to all this damage but every time I sought out help it was not available. Take a quick moment and think, Does teaching our kids to fend for their lives every day or focus on academics is what you want children to worry about?. Imagine if these were your own children and you know nothing of the issues they are struggling with till its to late or the battle for their mind truly becomes an issue. I believe that the Ohio Department of Education should not make it optional to create a task force or have additional resources but that funding should be in place for teachers and staff alike to attend mental health first aid training. Additionally, I believe that all boards should be certified in de-escalation training available to help teachers, students, and staff in this great state. To become safer schools, we should be able to provide additional funding for mental health services on site within schools by utilizing already existing mental health and social service agencies by giving them additional funding to focus on our now. If we don't care of the now, what will our future truly look like without taking care of the problems of today.