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Testimony to the Senate Finance Committee

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Thank you Chairman Dolan, Vice Chairman Burke and members of the Ohio Senate finance committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify. My name is Milan Karna and I am an Ohio Certified Prevention Consultant and the Coordinator of the Wood County Prevention Coalition. I also serve on numerous groups including an advisory board member of the Statewide Prevention Coalition Association, Co-Chair of the Wood County Opiate Task Force, as well as a member of the Bowling Green State University Alcohol and Other Drug Task Force. It has been an honor to work with so many outstanding individuals in Wood County and in the great State of Ohio that deeply care about giving our communities' youth and allow them every opportunity to succeed and life.

As such, I am asking the Senate to restore K-12 prevention education funding to the level found in the House and Executive versions of the budget. Our children today face many challenges and pressures of academics, extracurricular activities, and home and personal life. Without the support of evidence-based prevention education, Ohio's children may find themselves susceptible to the use of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco (including vaping), prescription painkillers, Adderall, K2/Spice or Synthetic Marijuana just to name a few. Abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs is costly to our Nation, exacting more than \$740 billion annually in costs related to crime, lost work productivity and health care (National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2017).

Instead of hemorrhaging money, it is time for Ohio to do the most fiscally and morally responsible action it can: invest in our most valuable asset, our children. For every dollar spent on prevention education curricula (of which is currently implanted in Wood County), up to \$50 per dollar invested has been saved in societal costs (Washington State Institute for Public Policy). In Wood County, every sector of the community is involved. The Wood County Prevention Coalition is a year 5 Drug Free Communities Support Program Grantee, one of a few federally supported opportunities in Ohio for coalitions to support environmental strategies to reduce youth substance use in their communities. Since funding began in 2014, 30-day reductions in alcohol and marijuana use, have been reduced by 26.5% and 14.1%, respectively, amongst 12<sup>th</sup> grade seniors and are currently at the lowest rates of use (along with all other substances with the exception of vaping) since data began to be collected in 2004. Simply stated prevention works. It is my hope that every Ohio community can replicate the success we have had in Wood County with the support of K-12 prevention education funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.