



recognizing depression • preventing suicide

**Ohio Senate Finance Committee
June 17, 2019
Proponent Written Testimony Sub HB 166**

Dear Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and Senate Finance Committee Members:

LifeAct greatly appreciates the Ohio Senate for providing funding for targeted programming in suicide prevention, which demonstrates further commitment to address the youth suicide epidemic in Ohio.

As you may be aware, after accidents, suicide will take more lives than any other cause of death for Americans under the age of 35 – twice as many as homicide! The rate of suicide for some of the youngest and most vulnerable members of our State is skyrocketing. 15% of 9th grade females have reported making a suicide attempt. This was 10% just 10 years ago. The rate of suicide for young African-American males has almost doubled in that same period. The suicide rate for 10-14 years-old children has almost tripled in the last 10 years.

LifeAct believes that to effect real change at a local level you need to design and deliver programs that are locally sensitive to socioeconomic and demographic differences. LifeAct in-person, classroom programs are unique in Ohio with unrivalled efficacy. Established more than 25 years ago, LifeAct has been delivering culturally sensitive and relevant programming, in small-group, school settings, directly to Ohio students for more than 16 years. Our program is more than education. Our instructors remain with the students to answer questions and, connect them to the professional who can help them navigate their mental health issues. Our program focuses on the strength of a peer-to-peer model. Teens will know well before the adults if they, or a friend, are in need of help. They need the courage to act upon it and we equip them with the resources.

Through our in-class programming, delivered in-person by our trained instructors, we have educated more than **250,000 students** about the signs of depression and the early-warning signs of suicide.

More importantly, our team of instructors has assisted more than **15,000 Ohio** teens and adolescents who came forward seeking help as an outcome of our programming.

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Jack Binder

2016 recipient, Ohio Nonprofit Excellence Award



2016 recipient, Teen Mental Health Award



LifeAct has tripled our service delivery within Ohio over the last 10 years. This has all been done with private funding. However, looking to the future, the ability to respond to all of the schools that seek our programs will require the support provided by the Senate. This will enable us to build capacity to provide additional services across more communities during this critical time. Our history would indicate that we are very capable of leveraging investment and I sincerely believe that for every public dollar invested in teen suicide prevention in Ohio, we will be able to generate 2-3 dollars of private capital to support the long-term expansion of this vital programming. In addition, the reduction of social welfare expenditures by early intervention of mental illness will far outweigh any public investment in this epidemic.

Thank you for your support and commitment to the prevention of suicide among Ohio's youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Binder", written in a cursive style.

Jack Binder
CEO, LifeAct