



House Bill 110 Interested Party Testimony
Terry Uhl, Chair, Shoes and Clothes for Kids
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
May 18, 2021

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone and Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today as an Interested Party on HB 110, the state operating budget. I am Terry Uhl, executive director of Shoes and Clothes for Kids, a 50-year old basic needs non-profit organization serving some of the neediest children in northeast Ohio. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you this morning about how our organization can provide those kids with the clothes, shoes and other important supplies they need to improve their school attendance, impact their performance on the state's third grade reading test and help give them the self-esteem needed to overcome the myriad barriers they face on a daily basis.

I have been privileged to be part of Shoes and Clothes for Kids since 1999 when I joined the board of directors. I served a three-year term as chair 2009-2011 and then stepped in as interim executive director in early 2016 during a critical time for our organization. In the past five years we've doubled our size, served thousands more kids and teachers and have shown that our programs have a direct impact on improving school attendance and student outcomes. We are asking for your support to start a pilot program in Lorain County that we believe can have an even bigger impact, while expanding our efforts in Cuyahoga County as well.

Shoes and Clothes for Kids serves 15,000 to 20,000 kids annually through four programs. First is our Legacy Program where we work with nearly 30 neighborhood partner organizations to distribute new school appropriate clothing, shoe vouchers, socks, underwear, personal hygiene kits and laundry detergent four times a year to the kids and families they identify and serve. You would be amazed at how clean, well-fitting clothes can have a positive impact on kids school attendance and outcomes.

Second is the Special Teams Package program, where Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) teachers and administrators can order up to 1,000 packages, like above, to be delivered to kids who are in the most dire situations. That program has been funded for several years by the Cleveland Browns Foundation and is the genesis of their statewide school attendance program. The attendance data in that program has shown over the three schools years prior to the pandemic school attendance up 25% in the 30 days after kids receive our services.

Our third program, the Classroom Guarantee Pilot Program, seeks to make those attendance gains permanent. In collaboration CMSD we developed the Classroom Guarantee Pilot Program in 2019

after teacher focus group meetings, discussions with CMSD senior leadership, and the success of SC4K/Cleveland Browns Special Teams Package program on improving school attendance up to 25%.

The goal of Classroom Guarantee program is to increase school attendance over the course of the full school year and thereby improve third grade reading test passage rates. The focus on the K-3 level is intentional because third grade reading test scores are among the best indicators on whether a student will have a successful academic career.

We do this by providing approximately 1,000 students at five CMSD schools all the school clothing, shoes and student school supplies needed throughout the year. We also provide the teachers in the 40+ classrooms all the classroom school supplies we have available at our Cleveland Kids in Needs Resource Center, an affiliate of the national Kids in Need Foundation. The Cleveland Kids in Need program is the fourth program we operate.

We are interested in creating a similar two-year pilot program in Lorain County in cooperation with Lorain Public Schools and other stakeholders in Lorain County. We also plan to expand the program in Cuyahoga County to include more inner ring suburban schools.

We know that what we do works. Over the past five years, we've gone from serving a couple thousand students a year to doubling our fundraising efforts in order to serve more than 15,000 students per year. We collaborate with organizations such as the Cleveland Browns and University Hospitals to start new programs that serve the neediest kids in the community. We recently were the beneficiary of a program sponsored by Ford to support impactful community programs with the complimentary use of a Ford Transit van to deliver more clothing and school supplies to our partners. We are working hard to expand our impact -- a measurable, tangible impact -- so that every day more kids have the chance to get to school and stay in school because they have the things they need.

I appreciate your time today. We encourage your support of an amendment to HB 110 that would use TANF dollars to fund the expansion of a program in Cuyahoga County and into Lorain County that can help kids get to school, stay in school and have a better chance of a successful life. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.