

WestCare Ohio/East End Community Services

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May 7, 2024

Representative Gail Pavliga
Chair, House Behavioral Health Committee
Ohio Statehouse
1 Capitol Square, First Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
Delivered via email: OHRBehavioralHealthCommittee@ohiohouse.gov

The Honorable Chair Pavliga,

As the Executive Director of East End Community Services, I write to express our strong support for House Bill 352, which establishes the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study Commission. This bill represents a crucial step forward in addressing the prevalence and effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in our communities.

There is no community that feels the impact of ACEs more than the east side of Dayton.

The neighborhoods of inner east Dayton are low-opportunity areas where children and families are caught in the devastating cycle of generational poverty. **The child poverty rate in the targeted neighborhoods is more than 60 percent.** The population is diversifying, as more immigrants from Africa and Central America are establishing homes in east Dayton. Two of the most distressed zip code areas in Montgomery County, where East End targets our services, are 45410 (where East End is located), and 45403. The opioid epidemic has been particularly devastating in these East End neighborhoods and continues to tear apart families. Overall academic performance of students attending DPS, and high school graduation rates (71%) are well below state standards.

East End Community Services is deeply committed to building a prosperous, caring, and healthy community that nurtures disadvantaged children and their families toward success. For over 25 years, we have been working tirelessly to break the cycle of generational poverty in the east side of Dayton. Our holistic approach, centered around whole-family coaching, aims to interrupt the cycle of despair by empowering families to set and achieve their goals.



“Building a healthy, caring and prosperous community that nurtures children toward success and uplifting the human spirit.”

The establishment of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study Commission outlined in HB 352 aligns seamlessly with our mission and values. By recognizing ACEs as potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood, the bill acknowledges the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to mitigate their impact. As an organization that serves over 5,000 unduplicated individuals each year, including children, adults, and families of diverse backgrounds, every day we witness firsthand the profound effects of ACEs on mental health, well-being, and overall community resilience.

The statistics regarding ACEs in Montgomery County and the surrounding region are alarming. According to Montgomery County ADAMHS, Black children under the age of 13 are twice as likely to die by suicide compared to their White peers. Additionally, nearly one in four adults in Western Ohio reported experiencing four or more ACEs. These numbers underscore the urgent need for action to address the root causes of adversity and trauma in our communities.

HB 352 lays out a comprehensive framework for addressing ACEs through the establishment of a diverse and multidisciplinary Study Commission. By bringing together experts from various fields, including social work, law enforcement, psychology, pediatrics, and mental health, the Commission will be well-equipped to develop evidence-based strategies and recommendations for the General Assembly.

Moreover, the bill recognizes the disproportionate impact of ACEs on economically disadvantaged individuals, communities of color, and refugee communities, individuals with developmental disabilities, and systems-involved youth. East End serves these vulnerable populations on a daily basis and can attest to the significant impact ACEs have on their lives.

HB 352 holds promise for addressing systemic barriers and promoting resilience across all segments of our society.

In conclusion, I urge you to support House Bill 352 and its vital mission to address the prevalence and effects of adverse childhood experiences. By investing in prevention, early intervention, and trauma-informed care, we can create a brighter and more equitable future for all Ohioans.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Jan Lepore-Jentleson

Jan Lepore-Jentleson
Executive Director
East End Community Services