



# OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**HB 571 - Require high schools and higher education institutions to provide the national suicide and crisis lifeline number to students**  
**Representative Andrea White**

Chair Pavliga, Ranking Member Brewer and members of the House Behavioral Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to come and testify on House Bill 571 which will require high schools, colleges and universities and other higher education institutions to include the national suicide and crisis lifeline number, 9-8-8, on student identification cards, student planners (as applicable) and electronic portals.

I am about to share some alarming information that as legislators we need to know about and act on urgently to help our young people. As you are no doubt aware, in recent years there has been a substantial increase in mental health needs in Ohio, especially for our student population both in the K12 and post-secondary spaces. Aside from unintentional injuries, suicide is the leading cause of death for college students. In fact, 24,000 college students per year are attempting to take their own lives. According to the Ohio Youth Environments Survey (just high school students), one in three Ohio students reported challenges with anxiety, which is higher than the national average. One third of Ohio students report feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and almost 115,000 high school aged youth in Ohio experience depression. In the past year, 22% of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide and one in 10 attempted suicide. The past decade has seen a disturbing increase in suicide attempts in youth, particularly in ages 10 to 12. The increase in suicide attempts in kids ages 10 to 12 went from 1,058 in 2010 to 5,606 in 2020. The most staggering statistic of all is one youth ages 10-24 dies by suicide every 34 hours in the State of Ohio.

From 2019 to 2021, Ohio high school students reported significant increases in mental health concerns including the following sobering statistics:

- Youth who felt sad or hopeless – 29% increase
- Youth who seriously considered attempting suicide – 38% increase
- Youth who made a plan about how they would attempt suicide – 48% increase
- Youth who attempted suicide – 40% increase

As many of you may know, thanks in considerable part to H.B. 468, sponsored by our Chair, Representative Pavliga in the 134<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, as well as \$46.5M secured through HB33 in the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, the State of Ohio has made significant investments in recent years to the national suicide and crisis lifeline number, 9-8-8 which was officially launched in July of 2022. In Ohio, we have 19 call centers with an average of speed of 21 seconds to answer and 90% of the calls made to 988 in Ohio are answered within the state. According to the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services 2023 annual report, there was an average monthly 11,140 calls, texts and chats and a

total of 153,231 call made to the lifeline between June 2022 and June 2023. I have been fully supportive to those efforts to help Ohioans. As we can see in the research, about 80% of behavioral health crises can in fact be resolved through a phone conversation.

HB 571 require that at both the high school and higher education levels, 9-8-8 will be included on student ID's, student planners and/or electronic portals depending on the primary methods of student connection being utilized by our schools, colleges and universities. Our intention would be that by including this resource on materials that students are interacting with on a regular basis, they would be much more aware that it exists and, in turn, be more inclined to use it in a time of crisis for themselves, a friend or a loved one.

This legislation will increase awareness and access to this resource that we have worked so hard to establish in our state among our vulnerable students who need it today more than ever. Increasing awareness in our students of the availability of 9-8-8 – and the beginning of access to much-needed help that is literally a phone call away – will save lives.

I want to thank one of my constituents, Dr. Sallie Wilson Luther, who has been a staunch long-time advocate for mental health and suicide prevention, who shared with me the idea for this bill based on a similar one that passed in South Carolina a few years ago. Chair Pavliga, Ranking Member Brewer and members of the House Behavioral Health Committee, thank you for allowing me to come and testify and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.