



**Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
Interested Party Testimony
HB 33- State Operating Budget**

**Amy Gordon, Executive Director & CEO
Communities In Schools of Ohio**

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Chair Carruthers and Ranking Member Liston, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 33, the State Operating Budget, in support of Communities In Schools of Ohio's funding request, which would appropriate \$500,000 in each fiscal year within the Department of Job and Family Service's TANF Block Grant for Communities In Schools of Ohio to provide comprehensive supports for vulnerable youth for wraparound services, which directly impact academic success.

My name is Amy Gordon, and I serve as the Executive Director and CEO of Communities In Schools of Ohio.

Communities In Schools of Ohio is a nonprofit that positions a full-time School Site Coordinators in high-need schools throughout the state all day, every day, to assess students' needs and provide resources to help them succeed in the classroom and in life. CIS identifies kids at risk of dropping out and not graduating, or otherwise at-risk of academic failure. We partner with local businesses, social service agencies, health care providers, universities, and volunteers, to connect youth in need to programs, services and resources, keeping them in school and on a path to life-long success. In short, we build and cultivate relationships that empower students to succeed.

Across Ohio, approximately 1 in 5 children under 18 live in povertyⁱ. These are disproportionately children of color who already struggle with issues of access and equity. Without community support from people and organizations like CIS, these youth are more at risk for missing school, dropping out and failing to earn a high school diploma, and these challenges have been exacerbated by the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ohio's chronic absenteeism rate more than doubled in 2020-2021 to a rate of 24% -- up from 11% in 2019-2020. Chronic absenteeism is defined as an individual absence rate of 10% or more during an academic year and is a leading contributing factor for dropping out of school.ⁱⁱ

By sixth grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Attendance is impacted by multiple issues; however, the problem is particularly acute for students who face the most significant barriers, including students from low-income families, students of color, and students with disabilities. The resulting dropout rates impact society broadly: nationally, 63.2% of high school dropouts are not currently in the workforceⁱⁱⁱ, and the negative effects on families and communities are incalculable.

The CIS evidence-based model works with students at every level of their education, providing resources and support to keep them in school and on track, all the way to graduation. The CIS model provides integrated student supports that involve three integral categories: peer networking, data and analytics, and case management to address chronic absenteeism and, consequently, dropout rates. The CIS case management model aims to work with 10% of the partnership schools' student population (5% if school enrollment is over 1,000 students) to affect outcomes in student attendance, behavior, and core academics. The CIS evidence-based model employs an innovative, holistic approach to addressing both the academic and nonacademic needs of students, working with the highest-risk populations to help students succeed.

With state investment in CIS through the TANF Block Grant in the last two General Assembly state operating budgets, Communities In Schools of Ohio has expanded its impact from serving only central Ohio, where it had been serving students for more than 25 years, to providing services and programs to schools across the state. By the end of this 2022-2023 school year, CIS will be serving over 50 schools across six communities in Ohio, more than doubling the number of schools and communities served prior to the state's investment in CIS of Ohio. We are now serving locations in Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Youngstown, and Toledo.

The data from the 2020-2021 school year captures the impact CIS is having with the funding the state has previously invested. In that year, we served 36 schools and over 18,500 students. Of the students served, 91% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, and 1,366 were case-managed students. Of those case-managed students, who receive intensive supports through CIS, 90% showed improvement in behavior; 80% showed improvement in academic goals; 71% improved in attendance, and more than 99% stayed in school.

The state's investment in Communities In Schools is working and we respectfully request that you consider an increased investment this year to a total of \$500,000 per fiscal year for Communities In Schools of Ohio. The increased funding will enable us to continue expanding into high-need schools, serve more youth, and deepen our impact with youth who need it most.

I am joined by one of our CIS School Site Coordinators, Caylan Stevens, who would like to share some of her experiences with you at this time.

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ⁱ Ohio Department of Development, *The Ohio Poverty Report*, 2020, https://development.ohio.gov/static/community/redevelopment/The-Ohio_Poverty-Report-June2020.pdf

ⁱⁱ Attendance Works, *Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success*, <https://www.attendanceworks.org/absences-add-up/>

ⁱⁱⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/figures/fig_24.asp?referrer=figures