

Dear Senator Matt Dolan and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

THANK YOU for funding Ohio Adolescent Health Centers (OAHC) in the 2019-2021 and the 2021-2023 Ohio State Budget to serve Ohio schools with risk avoidance education. I am Catherine Wood, President of OAHC which is a nine-member collaborative covering 74 counties in the state. Many of our nine members have been serving students in public schools since 1987 depending on funding. Millions of students in Ohio have received our programs and we have 99 percent positive comments from classroom teachers and students. Often students say, “you have saved my life” or “you made me think differently about what I will choose.” Our ten lessons per grade levels 5-12 meet many Ohio laws and include information on healthy relationships, mental health and social health, character building, drugs and alcohol, dating violence, pornography, human trafficking, and how to build strong future communities – things our students are desperate to hear. One student wrote, “I realized I was the bully and want to change that.” During a presentation at one of the Olentangy schools last April, a double class of 60 students gave our instructor a standing ovation. Students want to know the information we share, and classroom teachers are appreciative of our help. Where we teach, principals often report that attendance is highest the weeks we present, and this has been happening for years. During Covid19 our instructors were called “essential educators” by the schools and were the only guest speakers allowed to enter the schools that were open. Other schools scheduled our virtual classrooms. We are back in-person and building back to the over 100,000 students a year we served before Covid. Through the current budgeting process, it looks as though the schools have an excess of money right now, but that money has already been allocated and we are **not** in those budgets. We already have many schools scheduled for next year. To wait on school systems to pay for our services does not allow us to hire more instructors and have them ready to begin in

the next school year. That is why this line is so important. The Parents Right to Know Law now has schools calling us to schedule to meet the requirements of this law and several other laws. Our evaluation results are well documented and show that we have made incredible contributions to education in this state and saved the state millions of dollars as evidenced by two reports on return on investment. Since 2011 OAHC has served over one million five hundred thousand students. The budget line to be resubmitted in HB33 would allow us to serve over 250,000 students in the next two years. We humbly ask for the Ohio Adolescent Health Centers line in the budget to be resubmitted and approved for 2023-2025. Thank you for your kind attention and I am available for any questions.