



Proponent Testimony: SB 108 Ohio Senate Health Committee

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Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Committee it is my privilege to offer this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 108 which would establish and regulate scholars' residential centers.

My name is Missy Hendon Deters and I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the Boys Hope Girls Hope of Cincinnati and SB 108 would take the much-needed steps to ensure our small organization is properly and appropriately regulated by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services.

Before I go into the necessity and outcome, should SB 108 pass, I would like to provide you with some background about our organization.

Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHGH) was founded in 1977 by Father Paul Sheridan, S.J., an educator in St. Louis, who created Boys Hope Girls Hope to provide opportunity where it would otherwise not exist for children living in poverty. Today, Boys Hope Girls Hope has fifteen affiliates across the United States as well as three locations in Latin America. Each share a common mission but operate as independent agents of hope.

The mission of Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHGH) is to nurture and guide motivated young people in need to become well-educated, career ready men and women for others.

We believe that everyone has the potential to be successful, and Boys Hope Girls Hope creates the opportunity. For more than three decades, we have pioneered academic focused programs that provide at-risk young people with the consistent, loving support they need to grow into successful, thriving adults. Committing to their journey all the way from middle-school through college and beyond, we provide a stable, nurturing community where young people are fully championed – academically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and socially – providing the foundation they need to transform their lives.

Incorporated in 1983 Boys Hope Girls Hope of Cincinnati serves youth who want to go to college and create successful futures for themselves. Our scholars have voluntarily joined our program to receive support on their journey to college and beyond. They seek the academic resources, extracurricular opportunities, and mentor relationships the chapter provides. In 1998 the Cincinnati Chapter began serving young women with the opening of a girls' home in East Walnut Hills.

The young men and women served by our programs are living in poverty with the majority living in some of the most depressed neighborhoods in each respective metro region. The demographic composition of our Scholars can run as high as 100% African American and will often include some variance of up to 5% Caucasian, 5% Latino, and 10% Bi-racial children. Many of our Scholars will be the first in their families to attend college, and for some, the first to graduate from high school. While their families want to see them succeed, they look to BHGH for partnership and guidance that otherwise would not exist to ensure their children are empowered by the critical opportunities necessary to reach their full potential.

Boys Hope Girls Hope's activities reflect our commitment to building and sustaining a long-term and meaningful partnership with each child and their family. Our decade-long continuum of comprehensive support and opportunities include our hallmark *Residential Program* for young men and women 12-18 years of age. Our Residential program addresses the fundamental right of each child to have a safe and nurturing environment which provides the support needed for them to achieve their full potential. Our Residential Program provides a long-term home during the school year, much like you would find at a boarding school or post-secondary institution, with holistic around-the-clock care and a college preparatory education with one of our partner parochial schools. Our residential philosophy contends that the combination of a quality education, a safe and secure residential facility, and a consistent routine will provide Scholars with the values and opportunities they need to reach their full potential in life.

Scholars live in one of our three residential homes Our Residential Scholars have daily structured routines that include their regular study and tutoring hours where they work with tutors and BHGH's professional academic team on homework and test preparation, family style meals, assigned chores, participation in recreational activities, volunteering at school and on campus, and they engage in extracurricular activities and sports at their school just as any student would. Mental health services are part of our care for the whole child and our wrap around services. During their 4 to 6-year placement in the Residential Program, we have seen Scholars realize and achieve their potential time and time again.

Now that you have some background on our Mission and the work we do in our voluntary and competitive Residential Scholars program I'd like to turn my focus to why SB 108 is so important to BHGH Cincinnati.

Since each our chapter's inception in Ohio in the 1980's the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) has served as the department charged with oversight and certification of the Boys Hope Girls Hope. We are classified within the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) as

“Children’s Residential Centers, Group Homes, and Residential Parenting Facilities” and as such we required to obtain certification on a biennial basis. At first glance this makes sense. Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHG) provides a residential boarding atmosphere for teenagers to attend a school, usually a private Catholic school, outside of their home public school district. However, as you peel back it becomes clear that ODJFS is the proverbial round hole, BHGH the square peg and in practice there is very little, if anything, in common between BHGH and the facilities ODJFS so appropriately regulates.

Here are some important points to consider:

- The purpose of OAC Code 5101:2 is to protect children and young adults who sadly find themselves in need of a home or treatment facility and must be placed under the care and supervision (usually guardianship) of others who are not their parents or legal guardians. As I’ve discussed previously Boys Hope Girls Hope academic scholarship-based mission is very different.
- Nearly every child, young adult, and group home or residential center regulated under OAC 5102:2 receives funding under Title IV of the Social Security Act administered US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This block grant to states is meant to provide [Aid and Services to Needy Families with Children and Child-Welfare Services](#). As we dig a little deeper within Title IV we arrive at Title IV-E which provides for [Federal Payments for Foster Care, Prevention, and Permanence](#). Unlike every other facility or program covered under OAC 5102:2 the Boys Hope Girls Hope chapters never assume or are given guardianship or custodial rights and **BHGH programs receive zero dollars in Title IV funding, nor would it be appropriate for us to receive such funding.**
- Each scholar who enters the BHGH program does so of their own choosing and with the full approval of their parents or guardians. BHGH scholars often go home on the weekends or at various points during the week and their parents or guardians are invested and involved from the very beginning. **BHGH is voluntary and competitive scholarship program.**
- Both Ohio BHGH chapters are part of our national affiliate network with a robust manual of policies and procedures that are strictly enforced as a condition of affiliation. Of course, the safety and security of BHGH scholars is the most important priority and that is reflected in BHGH internal processes.
- While it may not be a perfect analogy the most apt for our residential scholar mission would be to think of BHGH as the “boarding” component of our partner educational institutions.

As you can imagine the process for recertification of *Children’s Residential Centers, Group Homes, and Residential Parenting Facilities* is quite laborious. For those types of facilities, which BHGH isn’t, that’s how it should be for those facilities given the unique and critical role they play in the lives of those children and young adults. Yet, as we take a step back and look at how those regulations apply to BHGH chapters in Ohio the answer seems pretty clear, they really don’t match well at all and the burden on our Chapter is profound when you consider we However, those regulations simply don’t apply to the Boys Hope Girls Hope chapters in Ohio

and the result is our annual financial burden of compliance is nearly \$100,000. That's nearly ten percent of our budget.

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members as I close, I again want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to share with you more about Boys Hope Girls Hope of Northeastern Ohio and why we strongly and unequivocally support SB 108. There's no doubt this legislation will have a positive impact and further allow BHGH of Cincinnati to continue to deliver on our Mission. I look forward to continuing to work with you, this Committee and Members of the Ohio Senate on SB 108 and I appreciate your time.

Thank you.

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