



Ohio Senate  
Health Committee  
House Bill 33

Nichole E. Dunn, President & Chief Executive Officer; Flying Horse Farms  
May 10, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Antonio and Members of the Health Committee. I am Nichole Dunn, President & CEO of Flying Horse Farms.

On behalf of the 10,000 campers served to date, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of funding for Flying Horse Farms contained in House Bill 33.

Flying Horse Farms is a statewide medical specialty camp making it possible for children with serious illnesses to heal, grow, and thrive.

With expert medical and mental health care, our adaptive facilities, centrally located in Morrow County, provide a safe and fun environment to **serve nearly 1,000 children and their families annually - at no cost to the family.**

We have a unique, onsite health center, staffed 24/7 by medical and psychosocial professionals. Our food service program serves over 60 individualized dietary menus each day, supports the medical team by ensuring nutrition via GI tubes, and manages exposure to multiple allergies including the ability to provide a child whose body allows for only 6 safe foods.

Our world-class facilities include equitable and fully adapted activity areas, meeting the varying physical and environmental needs of the children we serve; such as a zero-grade temperature-controlled pool to support children with sickle cell managing their pain crises, ADA-accessible high-ropes course and zipline for children with shortened limbs and low mobility, boating, archery, music therapy, and much more.

Flying Horse Farms has been ranked by Newsweek as a 2023 best summer camp in the United States, in addition to being recognized as a Top Workplace. Utilizing our facilities, expert staff, and incredible volunteers - **Flying Horse Farms provides 14 different programs**, specifically designed for children and families impacted by the diagnosis of a serious illness. Programs are offered for children who have been diagnosed with heart, gastrointestinal, and pulmonary conditions, cancer and bleeding disorders, juvenile arthritis, craniofacial anomalies, and rare diseases.

Since our inception in 2010, Flying Horse Farms has recognized the impact of mental and behavioral health conditions on children and their families. **In 2023, 55% of incoming campers are also receiving care for a psychosocial diagnosis.** Beginning this year, Flying Horse Farms will add residential programming serving campers with mental health conditions as the primary diagnosis, further expanding our ability to serve Ohio families.

Kids that come to Flying Horse Farms are navigating days with regular disruptions due to doctor appointments, scares with medication or allergies, sleepless nights of pain crises or trouble breathing. "Normal" activities may include monitoring insulin levels throughout a school day, explaining or being exhausted by questions and comments from peers who don't understand - and often, due to their diagnosis, are unable to attend a birthday party or school field trip with their class.

But when kids arrive at Flying Horse Farms and make their way down our center path, they are simply a camper- a kid - who begins to feel for the first time in a long, if not ever, a sense of belonging, finds confidence, and experiences laughter.

They might be a kid at heart camp with a scar down there chest just like their cabin mates. A kid like Simon, who last summer at age 10, was his first time coming to camp. And when he stayed in cabin 4, it was the first time he ever spent a night away from his family - except for a hospital room.

Simon also thought it was totally cool swimming in the pool and showing the scars down his chest because the other kids didn't care... they had scars, too.

A medical diagnosis brings significant impact to the entire family unit. 30% of families reported a deterioration in finances or loss of a job, 16% reported worsening of adult relationships after a medical diagnosis.<sup>1</sup> At Flying Horse Farms, we provide respite experiences to the entire family - campers, adult caretakers, and siblings of campers through diagnosis specific residential camps, siblings residential camp, family camps and more.

It is imperative we serve more children but also remove the barriers to the family to feel relief and respite themselves.

As I stand before you today, Flying Horse Farms originally requested \$1.25 Million in funding to enhance and expand services over the next two years to serve 25% more Ohio children annually.

We are grateful for the House of Representatives support in favor of \$500,000. And today request your support.

We recommend the continued inclusion of continuum of care funding to ensure more life-changing moments at camp will be possible for children and families navigating a serious illness.

Flying Horse Farms stands at the ready to respond to the growing need for more children to have medically, physically, and social-emotionally safe experiences.

Thank you very much for your time.

Nichole E. Dunn

Mobile: 614.738.0943

[nichole@flyinghorsefarms.org](mailto:nichole@flyinghorsefarms.org)

<sup>1</sup>Source: Montgomery et al. 2002



## ACCREDITATIONS

American Camp Association  
SeriousFun Children's Network  
GuideStar Silver Seal of Transparency

### ANNUAL RESIDENTIAL CAMPER AND CAREGIVER OUTCOME DATA (2022)

#### Camper surveys reflect:

- 100% felt reduction in isolation;
- 100% felt increased enjoyment;
- 98.9% report increased sense of normalcy; and
- 98% met a new friend at camp

#### Caregiver surveys following camp sessions showed that:

- 98% reported a reduction in family stress
- 92% reported their camper is more likely to try new things
- 89% reported an increase in self-confidence
- 88% reported their camper is more independent involving their medical care



### SERIOUSFUN LASTING IMPACTS STUDY (2021)

The study, including Flying Horse Farms campers, found that more than 80% survey respondents reported their camp experience played a significant role in their development and carried over into their adult lives including:

- Willingness to try new things (90%)
- Appreciation of diversity (88%)
- Self-identity (86%)
- Empathy and compassion (86%)
- Self-confidence (85%)

More than 70% survey respondents noted camp experiences also influenced their health-related quality of life, medical self-advocacy, and medical-related self-care.