



Ohio House Children and Human Services Committee
Interested Party Testimony
HB 96- State Operating Budget
February 27, 2025

Adero Robinson, Chief Executive Officer, Communities In Schools of Ohio

Chair White, Vice Chair Salvo, and Ranking Member Lett and members of the Children and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on **House Bill 96** in support of Communities In Schools of Ohio's funding request which would appropriate **\$500,000** in each fiscal year through the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services TANF Block Grant appropriation to provide comprehensive supports for vulnerable youth for wraparound services, which help address chronic absenteeism and directly impact academic success.

My name is Adero Robinson, Chief Executive Officer for Communities In Schools of Ohio. Our mission is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

Communities In Schools of Ohio (CIS) is a statewide non-profit that collaborates with school districts by placing site coordinators in schools full-time to connect students with caring adults, community resources, and other supports intended to keep students in the classroom. By prioritizing students experiencing issues such as chronic absenteeism, academic challenges, and behavioral issues, CIS works to empower students to overcome barriers to success.

Many students experience multiple adverse childhood experiences and often lack the support needed to meet their basic living and developmental needs. Using an evidence-based model, CIS takes an innovative and holistic approach to meet both the academic and non-academic needs of students.

Chronic absenteeism continues to be a significant barrier to academic success. Recent 2023-2024 data show a statewide absenteeism rate of 25.6%. The repercussions of missing a significant number of school days are serious including lower academic achievement, difficulty learning basic skills, increased risk of dropping out, poor social development, and potential mental and physical health. These consequences are particularly distinct among students from low-income communities, who face obstacles such as housing and food insecurity, neighborhood violence, transportation, unemployment, and other basic needs.

Aligned with the state's chronic absenteeism initiative, CIS aims to deepen these efforts, working collaboratively with families, schools, and community partners to create sustainable solutions for improving student attendance and retention.

Last year, CIS of Ohio served over 35,000 students, engaged 13,800 families, supported 2,700 case-managed students, and provided over 3,600 whole school supports. 78% of students increased their attendance, 79% in classroom behavior, 80% in academics, and 93% of seniors supported by CIS successfully graduated. These statistics underscore the effectiveness of CIS in positively influencing the lives and educational outcomes of students.

With state investment through the TANF Block Grant in the last two General Assembly state operating budgets, Communities In Schools of Ohio expanded its impact from central Ohio to schools across the state.

CIS partners with 52 schools in the following districts: Columbus City Schools, South-Western City Schools, Whitehall City Schools, National Heritage Academies, Cleveland Heights – University Heights Schools, Garfield Heights City Schools, plus FLEX High School, Green Inspiration Academy, Harambee Christian School, and Graham Elementary and Middle School.

I respectfully request your support of our budget amendment, which would allocate **\$500,000** per fiscal year to Communities In Schools of Ohio. This investment by the state will leverage private and foundation dollars in support of CIS to expand into high-need school districts, reach more students and serve an additional 10-15 schools over the next two years.

Thank you and I am happy to introduce my colleague, Caylan Stevens, Program Manager with Communities In Schools.