



Ohio School-Based Health Alliance

House Finance Committee

House Bill 96 FY26-27 State Operating Budget

Interested Party Testimony

March 12, 2025

Good morning Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 96, the SFY 26-27 operating budget.

My name is Katherine Bissett, and I am the Director of School-Based Health Care Initiatives at the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance ("Ohio Alliance"). The Ohio Alliance is the only statewide, independent, nonpartisan organization created to support school-based health care partners statewide and improve access to comprehensive, integrated health services through school-based health care.

The Ohio Alliance **supports the proposed appropriation of \$20 million for school-based health centers in the SFY 2026-2027 budget.** This line item is absolutely critical for the continued development of school-based health centers and to ensure that every child has the opportunity to access the healthcare services they need.

The Ohio Alliance also respectfully requests the designation of **an additional \$1M for the creation of a statewide data hub to support state-level tracking and evaluation of SBHCs**, and designate the task of developing the data hub to the Ohio Alliance.

School-based health centers

Through our Governor and legislature's support and investment, school-based health centers have become a very successful model for connecting Ohio's children to needed healthcare services. According to the Ohio Alliance's school-based health center census, during the 2023-2024 school year, **106 school-based health center sites reported serving more than 50,000 children and 19,000 community members statewide.**

School-based health centers operate as a collaborative partnership between a school/school district and a community healthcare provider. With parent or guardian consent, these centers provide comprehensive primary healthcare services to students and often also deliver behavioral, vision, and/or oral health services. These centers can also extend services to students' families, school personnel, and community members. In underserved areas of the state, such as rural Ohio or Appalachia, these centers may be the **only** available healthcare provider for the community.

We know that school-based health centers work at:

- **Keeping kids healthy and in school** so their education is not interrupted



- **Reducing costs to the healthcare system and Medicaid** by decreasing emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and improving care coordination and medication management, and
- **Allowing parents or guardians to stay at work** so they are better able to support their families, and prevent work productivity loss for employers.

Strengthening Ohio's school-based health center infrastructure

The allocation of \$20M over the biennium under the Ohio Department of Health's Health Program Support line item for the expansion of school-based health centers is a strong investment in the health and success of Ohio's children. These funds will benefit many school districts in Ohio that are in need of a school-based health center to address their student's healthcare needs and to keep their students in the classroom, healthy, and ready to learn.

Further, creation of a statewide school-based health center data hub will bring transparency and accountability to this investment, and track the state-level impact and progress these centers are making towards improving access to care for Ohio's children and communities. There is currently no statewide electronic data infrastructure for the tracking and reporting of center data. For this reason, we **request the addition of language that the task of developing a school-based health center data hub be designated to the Ohio Alliance, with an allocation of \$1M over the biennium.**

The Ohio Alliance also supports the **allocation of funding toward the Ohio Student Eye Exam Program, or OhioSEE**, to provide students in kindergarten through third grade with vision care services **and the Children's Dental Services Program** to provide children in underserved areas with dental care services.

As the only neutral, independent entity that works with Ohio's school-based health care partners statewide, the Ohio Alliance is uniquely situated and committed to providing technical assistance and data support to strengthen Ohio's school-based health center infrastructure. On behalf of the Ohio Alliance and our school-based health care partners, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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House Finance Committee
Sherry Shamblin, PhD
Chief Strategy Officer, Hopewell Health Centers
March 12, 2025

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee, my name is Sherry Shamblin and I'm the Chief Strategy Officer for Hopewell Health Centers — a non-profit, community health center serving 9 counties in Southeast Ohio. Hopewell has partnerships with over 20 different school districts, operates 4 school-based health centers with a fully integrated care model, and 13 school-based behavioral health centers.

I want to personally thank Governor DeWine and his administration, and the General Assembly for your investment in school-based health centers. Our state's investment allowed us to open and operationalize school-based health centers in Nelsonville-York City Schools and Federal Hocking Local Schools. In addition, we are building a partnership between Hopewell and the Warren Local School District in Washington County.

Ohio's investment in school-based health centers has had positive impacts. During the 2024 school year, Hopewell provided 66,000 care visits to 6,000 students at their schools. This care model has been tremendously successful in not only reducing barriers to health care, such as transportation and inability of parents to take time off work, but has also increased school participation for students in the districts we serve. With the distances in our rural part of the state, if a child has to be taken out of school for a healthcare appointment of any type, the child and usually all the siblings miss the whole day of school. The caregiver often can't manage transportation from school and/or childcare, so the whole family goes to the child's medical appointment that is one hour or less. This is particularly concerning for behavioral health appointments that may occur weekly. Through school-based health centers, we have been able to reduce the times that a child has to go home for illness. Our Nelsonville-York school-based health center boasts a 60-70% return-to-class rate. This means that 60-70% of the clinic visits result in the ability of the student to appropriately return to class due to accurate diagnosing on the nature of the illness.

I'm here today to ask you to continue this positive momentum by **supporting the allocation of \$20M for school-based health centers that is proposed in the budget**. We also understand the need for a statewide data hub to track our and our partners' impacts and **support allocation of an additional \$1M directed to the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance for the creation of a statewide data hub to amplify the great work of SBHCs statewide**.

This allocation will support additional expansion of school-based health centers in Ohio, especially in the more marginalized communities where schools and healthcare partners lack the resources to make the capital investments needed to open centers. The additional allocation will also assist with the development of a statewide data hub that will allow Ohio to develop common metrics across systems, support school-based health centers and their school partners with data collection/reporting, and provide the outcome data needed to drive meaningful future investments in school health.

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Finally, I also ask this committee to consider removing the proposed 340B changes in House Bill 96 that will have a significant negative impact for school-based health centers operated by Community Health Centers.

Based on information from the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance, more than 50% of school-based health center operators are Community Health Centers. These are non-profit, safety net providers with patient majority boards who work diligently with their schools and other community partners to address barriers to care. Community Health Center operators rely heavily on revenue gained from the 340B prescription program for funding to sustain school-based health centers. The proposed 340B changes would greatly threaten the ability of Community Health Centers to sustain current school-based health center operations and would make the expansion of these types of efforts beyond the reach of most CHC's. Please consider removing the 340B proposed changes so Community Health Centers can continue to operate school-based health centers in rural and underserved communities in Ohio.

School-based health centers are a critical component of the healthcare safety net in our rural Appalachian Counties, and throughout Ohio.

I have seen the great impacts being made in students' lives. By investing in this model, Ohio can ensure that all children have the opportunity to be healthy and succeed in school. I strongly urge this committee to support policies and funding that will allow for expansion and long-term sustainability of school-based health centers in our state.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you may have and appreciate your dedication to the well-being of Ohio's children.

Sherry Shamblin, Ph.D., LPCC-S

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Written Testimony

Before the
House Finance Committee
Joseph Spiccia
Superintendent, Wickliffe City School District
Member of the Board of Directors of the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance
March 12, 2025

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Joseph Spiccia. I am the Superintendent of the Wickliffe City School District and a member of the Board of Directors of the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance. I am here to advocate in **support of the \$20M allocated for funding of school-based health centers throughout the state.**

The Family Resource Center of Wickliffe opened in 2019. The Family Resource Center has a school-based health center that provides vital services to students and the community – including primary care, dental care, and mental health services to students and their families. In addition, the center provides the community with services ranging from free tax preparation to a clothing/food pantry.

As a school-based health center, we have become the dental, medical, and mental health home for hundreds of our students. Students receive physicals (athletic and work), vaccinations, primary care, comprehensive dental care, and mental health services on our school campus in partnership with our community healthcare provider and Federally Qualified Health Center, Signature Health. Students also have access to other services, such as health related programs, therapeutic programs, and academic supports.

The value of the center is tremendous. Because it is housed on campus, students have direct access to its services so students do not miss an extended amount of time from class, and families have direct contact with providers. Since opening in 2019, graduation rates have improved, attendance rates have improved, more students are able to participate in extracurricular and work-based learning programs, and more students are receiving the help they need to be successful beyond the walls of the school. We are a school district of approximately 1,300 students and last year the center served nearly 1,000 students.

Since opening our doors in 2019, the Family Resource Center of Wickliffe has now served over 10,000 people in our area, primarily our school aged children and their families. The center is a model for what a school district can and should become for its community and the expansion of the school-based health center model will improve outcomes for students, families, and entire communities.

We are also supportive of **an additional \$1M directed to the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance for the creation of a statewide data hub** to track the impact of school-based health centers statewide.

I have worked in public education in Ohio for 47 years in communities ranging from high-wealth suburban districts to high poverty rural districts. In each of those districts a school-based health center would be an indispensable part of the school community that would provide benefits to students and families. The first and most important step for a student to become successful is for that student to be healthy, well fed, and to feel that the community cares about him/her. School-based health centers can provide all of those essential elements.

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your consideration of this request. I am happy to answer questions you may have.