To: Health Committee:

Dear Chairman Schmidt, Vice-Chair Deter, Ranking Member Somani, Rep. Baker, Rep. Barhorst, Rep. Brownlee, Rep. Craig, Rep. Grim, Rep. Gross, Rep. King, Rep. Miller, Rep. Stewart and Rep. White,

I am writing today in support of HB 172.

Current Ohio law, ORC 5122.04, allows minors aged 14 and older to receive mental health services without parental consent. This law denies all parents the ability to help their children when they need it the most. It gives strangers the opportunity to administer health care services to children.

I do know for a fact that public schools are utilizing ORC 5122.04 to put children into counseling without their parents' knowledge. In Upper Arlington, a high school student received an email from the school psychologist at the direction of an Assistant Principal. The Assistant Principal recommended that the student would be a good candidate for one of the psychologists, and she actually scheduled an appointment for the child in her email.

The parents of the child were not copied on the email suggesting mental health counseling. The child had not asked anyone at the school for professional help. If the child had not informed his parents, they would be unaware of the recommendation. If the school administrator felt that counseling would be helpful for this student, this should be a discussion involving the parents, the child and the educators.

How many other students in Upper Arlington and around the entire state of Ohio have been put into psychological counseling because a school Administrator or teacher made that decision? It is unacceptable. ORC 5122.04 needs to be repealed.

In the 1925 US Supreme Court decision, *Pierce v the Society of Sisters*, the Court wrote that the state may not *"unreasonably interfere with the liberty of parents and guardians to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control*." Justice James C McReynolds wrote *"The child is not a mere creature of the State*." (*Pondiscio – see below for the article)* This Supreme Court decision is even more relevant today as many educators are trying to take over the role of parenting.

Before you vote, you must ask yourself, why does current Ohio law allow teachers and school administrators to judge what is best for a child? Why does Ohio law believe minors aged 14-18 should keep secrets from their parents? It does not make sense. No school personnel should be making decisions for anyone's child without parental involvement. It is time to return rights to Parents.

I urge you to Support HB 172 and bring common sense to our schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cathy Pultz

Protect Ohio Children

Board Member

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Pondiscio, Robert. *Schoolchildren are Not "Mere Creatures of the State"* September 2022

https://www.commentary.org/articles/robert-pondiscio/schools-vs-parents/