

House Bill 172
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Opponent Testimony
OHR Health Committee
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Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Melissa Meyer, and I have been a Middle School Educator in Northeast Ohio for over twenty years.

I am strongly opposed to HB 172, which many of us are calling the “Child Abuser Protection Act.”

HB 172, and its identical Senate companion, SB 274, would ban all mental health services for minors without parental consent, even in situations where the parent or guardian is the abuser. This bill would fully repeal Ohio Revised Code 5122.04, the longstanding law that allows minors aged 14 and older to receive up to 30 days or six sessions of mental health care without a parent’s signature.

This existing provision is not accidental; it is a lifeline. It exists because Ohio recognized decades ago that some children cannot safely seek help through their parents. For a child experiencing abuse at home, 30 days of confidential counseling may be their only chance to disclose what is happening, to form a safety plan, or simply to receive emotional support during the most traumatic period of their lives.

Repealing this protection does not strengthen families. It protects abusers, not children.

As an educator who has worked with middle school students for over two decades, I see firsthand how many children quietly endure physical, emotional, or sexual abuse with no safe adult at home to turn to. Students often share their fears only after building trust with a counselor or school-based mental health professional. This can take time, and the current law gives them that time.

Removing this safety net would drive vulnerable students deeper into silence. It would ensure that the very children who need help the most are the least able to get it. And tragically, some will not survive that silence.

This bill also places school personnel in an impossible position. We are mandated reporters, yet HB 172 removes the very pathway that helps students safely disclose abuse. It would cut off the only place where many children feel safe enough to speak.

Ohio should be expanding access to youth mental health support, not eliminating one of the few protections abused children have left.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote NO on HB 172 and SB 274.

Our students' lives, safety, and futures depend on maintaining their ability to seek help when they cannot turn to their parents.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and for considering my testimony.

~Melissa Meyer