

WRITTEN ONLY OPPONENT TESTIMONY FOR HB172

House Health Committee

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Dear Chair Jean Schmidt, Vice Chair, and Members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

My name is Ashley Jamison, and I am a licensed independent social worker and clinical therapist who provides mental health services to both youth and adults across Ohio. I am also a proud member of the National Association of Social Workers, Ohio Chapter.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 172, sponsored by Representative Johnathan Newman (R). This bill proposes to prohibit minors from accessing mental health services without parental consent, effectively eliminating a vital lifeline for adolescents who are in crisis.

Under current Ohio law, minors ages 14 to 17 are permitted to receive up to six outpatient sessions without parental consent when they are at risk of harm to themselves or others. This narrow exception allows trained professionals to provide immediate and confidential support during times of crisis. HB 172 seeks to repeal this important protection.

In my work with youth, I have seen firsthand how essential it is for teens to have access to judgment-free, confidential care—especially in cases where family involvement may not be safe, appropriate, or possible. For many adolescents, this access is their only opportunity to receive mental health support. Without it, we risk delaying care, worsening symptoms, and in some cases, contributing to preventable tragedies like suicide.

As mental health professionals, we are trained to assess when parental involvement is appropriate and necessary. We work with the best interests of the child in mind, always prioritizing safety and care. HB 172 undermines this process and strips young people of their right to seek help during a critical time.

We are already witnessing a mental health crisis among youth. Rather than introducing barriers, we must focus on expanding access to care and supporting the well-being of our children. HB 172 creates unnecessary obstacles for teens who need help and support now.

I urge you, Chair Schmidt and members of this committee, to protect the mental health of Ohio's youth by opposing HB 172. Please ensure that teens have the right to seek the care they need in times of crisis.

Sincerely,

Ashley Jamison, MSW, LISW, LICDC