

Good Morning/Afternoon

My name is Jack Hill and I am a Junior at Springfield High School. I am here testifying in opposition to House Bill 172. During my time at Springfield High School, I joined a group called the BATS mental health taskforce. Within this group, we task ourselves with bringing awareness to students. More specifically at our school, making students aware of the resources we have, and getting them familiar and comfortable with using them. One of our goals was to make students more comfortable in coming to their counselors or another trusted adult outside of the household. According to the 2025 Youth Risk Based Survey in Clark County, 42% of students felt like they had no trusted adult to go to. Why is this important you might ask? This pertains directly to House Bill 172. This bill was created to improve parental involvement in student life. The bill would require parental consent for any mental health treatment or counseling before a school can provide it to students. This is not currently the case as Ohio Revised Code Section 5122.04 to 6 visits with counselors before notifying the parents of the student. Not only will this cause strain on the parent-student relationship. But for kids who feel they may not be able to get permission to these resources, may discourage them from coming to their counselors in the first place. This is not the only thing this bill proposes however, the bill also requires much more information that students tell teachers and counselors to be disclosed to parents. Students may not feel comfortable disclosing certain information with their parents and may seek other adults in their life they trust. Teachers and Counselors are already mandated reporters, and this bill seeks to expand that disclosure beyond a student harming themselves, others, or suspicion of neglect or abuse.

With an already low number of students who have a trusted adult, removing the confidentiality between that student and adult is only going to discourage a student from reaching out at all. The consequences of students not being able to go to anyone about their problems can range anywhere from something like being more sad or feeling hopeless to considering suicide and dangerous alternative coping methods. In my own experience at Springfield High school, on countless occasions I've heard of and seen students using dangerous alternatives like smoking, drugs, or worse. By not passing this bill, you will be allowing students to be able to continue to have their promised 6 sessions with a counselor before involving parents, you will be allowing students to maintain their relationships with a trusted adult that they may have outside of the household, and you will be allowing students to have a safe release of emotions.

There are alternatives to accomplish the goal of this bill while also keeping the students as a priority. Focusing on building relationships between students and parents early is a great place to start. Talking to teachers, students, and school administrators about how this bill could negatively affect their schools and school districts will allow for a more effective and thought out solution that will still allow for students to have their resources, while simultaneously involving parents more. I strongly urge you all to consider this.

Thank you for your time.