

OPPOSITION TO HB 172
House Health Committee
Hearing 11/19/2025

Chairwoman Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for considering this opposition testimony to House Bill 172, repealing ORC 5122.04.

I understand that the sponsor's stated intent for this bill is to make the law consistent with the "Parents Bills of Rights Act" but in this instance, it is a matter of doubling down on bad policy.

It bears mentioning that HB8 of the 135th General Assembly received WELL OVER 200 individual and organizational testimonies in opposition, compared to fewer than 10 proponents.

The better and more student-friendly solution to this General Assembly-created problem would be to amend ORC 3313.473 to remove the prohibition of counseling-only student mental health services without parental notification.

Under the current ORC 5122.04, there is no ability to administer medication or discuss any gender related issues. The services offered to minors, specifically teenagers navigating the most difficult mental and physical transition of their lives, would include only counseling.

It would be naïve and disingenuous for ANY policy-maker to deny that the source of some mental anguish and mental health issues may generate at home with the very parents that this bill seeks to notify. Leaving these students to "the system" of reporting abuse is not only ineffective and insufficient, but does not address the many cases in which parental sources of mental health issues do not result in physical harm.

Not only may the parents be the cause of mental health issues facing teens, but mental health services often are stigmatized. Some parents are instantly offended by the idea that they are not providing the perfect solutions to their child, and would disallow counseling based on stigma or personal offense. These would be the students who likely need this counseling the most.

In short, both the "Parents Bill of Rights" and this proposed "fix" to current law HARMS CHILDREN. It was strongly opposed by the public and organizations that actually work to help children. It reduces the ability of teenagers in some of their most formative and confusing years to access important mental health services, and will cause some, if not many, of these children to suffer silently. This suffering does not end with the child either, but will cause ramifications through our society as we have seen with the endless number of school shootings and adulthood lives of crimes stemming from unaddressed mental health issues.

Instead of digging in deeper of the past, strongly publicly opposed legislation, please amend ORC 3313.473(A) to actually improve things in Ohio.