



Ohio School-Based Health Alliance
House Health Committee
House Bill 172
Interested Party Testimony
November 19, 2025

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Deeter, Ranking Member Somani, and members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 172. My name is Reem Aly, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance — the state’s only independent, nonpartisan organization dedicated to supporting access to high-quality, school-based health care so that children can be healthy and ready to learn.

We are deeply concerned that HB 172, which repeals Ohio Revised Code §5122.04, eliminates a critical safeguard that:

- **Protects youth who cannot safely seek help at home.** Licensed mental health providers are mandatory reporters who must immediately report suspected abuse or neglect. Without this narrow, time-limited safeguard, youth experiencing child abuse and neglect lose an initial point of contact with a licensed professional who can evaluate safety and take necessary action.
- **Prevents youth from reaching mental health crisis levels.** Youth may only feel safe disclosing suicidal thoughts or severe distress after initial, confidential conversations with a trusted professional. Eliminating this safeguard increases the likelihood that warning signs will be missed until a youth’s situation becomes far more dangerous and costly for families and communities.

Under Ohio Revised Code §5122.04, minors aged 14 and older may receive *limited* outpatient mental health counseling without parental consent for a brief period of time. Parent and family involvement is, and must remain, at the cornerstone of school-based health care services. However, for some youth, immediate parent or guardian involvement is not possible or safe — for example, when a child is experiencing abuse, neglect, family violence, or severe instability at home. In these instances, ORC §5122.04 provides a narrow safety net that allows a trained mental health professional to assess risk, stabilize the youth’s situation, and safely bring families into the process of care.

We know that early intervention prevents mental health crisis and that safe disclosure of abuse and neglect saves lives. Rather than full repeal of ORC §5122.04, Ohio could take a more balanced approach in HB 172 that strengthens safety, accountability, and parental rights. Maintaining a limited safety option for at-risk youth while reaffirming the essential role of parents and families in their child’s care is critical.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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