

Date: November 18, 2025

To: Health Committee

From: B.A.T.S. (Bringing Awareness To Students)

Chair Schmidt, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony regarding House Bill 172. My name is Mary Cunningham, and I am a student at The Miami Valley School and the president of B.A.T.S. (Bringing Awareness To Students). We are a youth-led, arts-focused prevention group dedicated to utilizing creativity and community action to prevent teen substance use and mental health disorders. Founded by students in Springfield, Ohio, we use our talents to educate and inspire our peers and our community to make healthy choices.

I am testifying because I see firsthand the mental health struggles of my peers. I urge this committee to reject H.B. 172 because it will block students from accessing critical help. House Bill 172 is not a mental health solution; it addresses only the surface level of the problem for students.

H.B. 172 forces young people to choose between keeping a harmful mental health crisis a secret or risk facing unsafe consequences at home. It has been communicated by many youth in our community that they specifically “fear” this bill being passed. Unfortunately, many youth in Springfield City Schools do not feel they have caring adults to go to in a crisis. According to the 2023 Clark County Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 42% of students have rarely or never had a caring adult to go to about their feelings, and 28% of students have lived with a parent or guardian who was having a problem with alcohol or drug use. Asking students to seek help and consent from the parents or guardians who are also struggling is difficult and sometimes impossible. For some students, school counselors and teachers are where they find trusted adults. Making it harder for students to seek help at school adds another barrier. At school, mental health education cannot happen when students are afraid. Students need to be able to ask questions and seek guidance without the school professional being afraid of the consequences stated in this policy. As a student and an advocate for my peers, I ask that you listen to the youth’s voices because we see how these bills are carried out in daily life. Please vote No on H.B. 172.

Thank you,

Mary Cunningham