

Members of the Ohio House Health Committee,

I am writing anonymously as a parent and survivor of a 23-year relationship defined by coercive control. My children and I lived for years under dynamics that were invisible to most people on the outside but devastatingly real behind closed doors. One of the most harmful aspects of that experience was that their father discouraged, maligned, and restricted their access to mental health care.

My children developed depression, OCD, eating disorders, and struggled with suicidal thoughts, all directly connected to the abuse they were living through. Their father repeatedly told them that they were “weak” or “had issues” if they needed someone to talk to, and insisted that therapy “messed people up.” He refused to allow them to engage in counseling and blocked access whenever possible. I was only able to secretly secure mental health care for my daughter, and it ultimately saved her life. Not every child has a parent who can intervene in that way, and no teenager should have to fight the adults who are supposed to protect them in order to receive basic mental health support.

I share this because the proposed repeal of Ohio Revised Code 5122.04 would eliminate one of the only safety nets available to young people like my children—youth who cannot safely involve a parent, whose parents refuse needed care, or who are too controlled, frightened, or restricted to ask for permission.

Not all homes are safe. Not all parents are emotionally stable, willing, or able to recognize a child’s mental health crisis. And some parents weaponize access to therapy as part of ongoing abuse. For teens in these circumstances, requiring parental consent does not protect families—it traps children.

When my daughter finally accessed mental health care, it was the first time she had an adult she could speak to freely. It helped stabilize her, and it quite literally kept her alive. If she had been entirely dependent on her father’s consent, she would not have received that support. I shudder to imagine the outcome.

Repealing this law would silence young people who are already voiceless in their own homes. It would leave children of coercive control, domestic violence, untreated parental mental illness, substance use, or emotional neglect with nowhere to turn. For some of them, short-term confidential counseling is the only safe moment they have to tell the truth, process trauma, or reveal danger.

I am asking lawmakers to consider the children who cannot safely speak up, who cannot write a letter, who cannot “get permission,” and who are living in fear every day. ORC 5122.04 is one of the few protections that exists specifically for them.

Please do not take away the small window of help that saved my daughter's life and could save countless others.

I urge you to vote NO on HB 172.