



**Interested Party Written Testimony  
Ohio Senate Education Committee  
Ohio Senate Bill 7**

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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Senate Bill 7, sponsored by Senator Terry Johnson. The OneOhio Recovery Foundation deeply appreciates the General Assembly's continued commitment to substance use prevention and education—especially initiatives that seek to engage Ohio's youth early, before addiction takes root. We are also especially grateful to Senator Johnson for his leadership on this issue and for his valued service as a legislative appointee to the OneOhio Board of Directors.

As Executive Director of the OneOhio Recovery Foundation, I have the honor of leading a nonprofit organization created to make a meaningful and lasting impact in the lives of Ohioans affected by addiction—and to help stop substance use disorder before it begins. The Foundation has been entrusted with a vital public mission: to steward 55% of the opioid settlement funds Ohio receives, and to use those resources to save lives, prevent substance misuse, support recovery, and build more resilient communities. Through strategic investment, advocacy, and close collaboration with partners across the state, we are committed to driving real change. Together, we aim to support those in recovery while building a healthier future where fewer Ohioans face the challenges of addiction.

One of our core strategic priorities is the investment in early prevention—programs and education that stop substance misuse before it begins. OneOhio recently finalized its first-ever grant cycle, through which we partnered with schools and prevention coalitions and invested more than \$11 million in 51 evidence-based, prevention-focused projects across the state, projected to impact more than 340,000 Ohioans. In this light, we commend the intent of SB 7, which recognizes that our schools play a critical role in shaping the health and well-being of future generations.

Decades of research—including findings from the 2016 U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health—underscore that prevention works best when it begins early and

continues across a child's development. The report emphasizes the importance of building protective factors—such as strong school engagement, social-emotional skills, clear expectations about substance use, and supportive adult relationships—as a shield against future misuse. These protective factors reduce risk at all ages and across backgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

Brain science further reinforces this need. Adolescents are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of substance use. The National Institute on Drug Abuse highlights how substances—particularly marijuana and opioids—can disrupt critical stages of brain development, impair memory, and increase the likelihood of lifelong substance use disorders.<sup>2</sup> A 2016 *Journal of Neuroscience* study found that youth marijuana use was associated with lasting structural changes in areas of the brain involved in decision-making and learning.<sup>3</sup> These impacts are preventable—but only if we act early.

SB 7's call for annual instruction across all grade levels, including specific education on the harms and legal consequences of substance use, aligns with modern prevention strategies. By normalizing open, factual conversations about addiction, we not only raise awareness—we build resilience.

Importantly, the bill's requirement to develop evidence-based curricula is also a crucial step. This ensures that schools are using programs backed by science, tailored to student developmental stages, and adaptable to the unique needs of Ohio's communities. The directive to survey compliance statewide will provide valuable insight into where support and resources are most needed.

While the OneOhio Recovery Foundation has not taken a formal position on SB 7, we wholeheartedly endorse its goals of early prevention education and collaboration. We stand ready to support state agencies, local leaders, and school districts as they implement this critical work. Together, we can protect future generations from the grip of addiction.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Ohio's future. I would be happy to answer any questions or offer further input as the bill progresses.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of the Surgeon General. *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*. Washington, DC: HHS, November 2016. <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov>

<sup>2</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. "The Teen Brain: Still Under Construction." National Institutes of Health, 2020. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/series/educator-classroom-resources/teen-brain-still-under-construction>

<sup>3</sup> Orr, C. et al. "Grey Matter Volume Differences Associated With Extremely Low Levels of Marijuana Use in Adolescence." *Journal of Neuroscience*, Vol. 36, No. 16, 2016, pp. 4431–4436. <https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.0745-16.2016>