HB 96 WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 04/07/2025

Name: Students At Meadowdale Career Technology Center

Are you representing: Yourself   **Organization**
Organization (If Applicable): Dayton Public Schools

Position/Title: Students

Address: 3873 Whitestone Court   City: State: Zip: Dayton, OH 45416

Best Contact Telephone: 937-903-5414 Email: kodonnell@daytonpublic.com

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? **Yes**

Business before the committee

      Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): House Bill 96

      Specific Issue: Youth Mental Health Funding

Are you testifying as a: **Interested Party**

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? **Yes**

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? **Each testimony is 1-2 minutes. There are seven testimonies related to providing more support for youth mental health services.**

Please provide a brief statement on your position: **The following testimonies advocate for more funding to address mental health issues, especially among youth.**

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

We Need Youth Mental Health Support

December 7, 2024

Read what students say needs to happen to address youth mental health, and learn how the candidates in the 2024 election said they would vote on increasing funding for mental health support.

Youth mental health is so bad right now because of childhood trauma like abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence. These experiences lead to increased risk of drug use and higher risk of sexual behaviors that can lead to HIV, STDs and unintended pregnancy.

We can improve youth mental health by creating supportive environments, increasing access to mental health services, teaching coping skills, normalizing seeking help, taking care of the body and mind, and investing in healthy relationships. The testimonies you're about to read remind us that mental health challenges are real, common and also treatable.

We would like to ask the Montgomery County Commission and other government entities to use our tax dollars in the budget to create peaceful places for the youth that can help them get the help they need.

Introduction by Courion Russell

Errington Bozeman: We're Quiet for a Reason

I am kindly asking our representatives to address mental health. I want to start with the kids who are enrolled in our schools. When kids go home and have to experience their drunk parent or guardian. This

problem can sometimes involve them getting hit and coming to school with bruises. When kids are put into situations like this they will most likely become depressed and will start falling back in school and will gain the disability of PTSD. Additionally, These things don't always go on when the guardian is intoxicated. They might just be upset and take it out on their kids, which is very traumatic.

According to The National Children's Alliance, there is an estimated number of 1,990 children under the age of 13 who passed away due to abuse and neglect in the United states. These kids don't even get the chance to experience the rest of their school years over a problem that could have been fixed. The challenges to the mental health caused by this abuse is something they will struggle for a long period of time and probably won't ever overcome.

Some of the things we can advocate for are Funding rehab facilities for the kids and their guardians. We could also start as low as talking and engaging in the kids more and building. Gain their trust so they will feel comfortable talking therefore they could begin the process of finding ways to help the child find coping skills. If we don't start taking mental health seriously it can result in more deaths. It can also end with a lot of trauma in their future which could affect the way kids develop. We can also invest in more peer support groups so kids will have a variety of people to choose from or so they'll always have someone to talk to when one of our counselors are out.

When I come to school I see a lot of kids with their hoods up or crying in the bathroom cause they don't have anybody to talk to and have home problems and come to school and stress over grades is too much for them and they get overwhelmed. When I see stuff like that I think back to myself and how I was growing up cause me and my mom parents didn't have the best relationship like I wanted us to have.

I start thinking of the ways I coped with things and try to get the advice I once used. I wish adults would notice when their kids are changed and try to gain a trusting relationship with them and not always blame them for stuff that they half of the time dont have any control over. Also we need adults to not always talk bad about the kids cause that doesn't always motivate them and make them wanna do better; it could make them think hard on why they are here and make them feel useless and make them wanna attempt. Also their rooms are dirty for a reason, they don't come out of their rooms for a reason, they get tattoos for a reason, they are quiet for a reason. So I am asking you to take mental health more seriously than it already is so the kids at my school or in our community can feel your support.

Five students wrote such strong testimonies on mental health that the Dayton Daily News published them in November! Check out the [DDN's post with testimonies](#) from Dyi'lai'kei Bass, Samya Camp, Traysean Powell, Airrica Jordan, and Makenzee Clark.

Dyi'lai'kei Bass: 'How many people have died because we didn't listen?'

It doesn't make sense to talk about drug addiction and mental health separately. The two are intertwined. Drug addiction is happening all over the world, but we can start in Dayton because we got hit hard. Drugs are addicting, deadly, and impact people I know personally. I've seen drugs turn people into addicts and make them extremely violent. People are not taking the problem of drug addiction seriously, and when they do, the impulse is to punish the user. The police just treat it as a crime instead of asking what makes them over use drugs or what makes people sell them.

The main cause of addiction is mental health struggles. People that have mental health issues could be trying to show signs that they need help, but people ignore them. A loved one might act out of character in a way they never acted before, but instead of recognizing the signs that they're struggling with their mental health, they get called insane or crazy. How many people have died because we didn't listen?

People need to understand the situation better before they just push the problem aside and treat it as a crime. I recommend that governments spend funds on making more mental health rehab centers to meet the need. I imagine a place to never get judged and also educate people about drugs and what they do to you mentally, emotionally, and physically. We will know it's successful if you see how many people avoid death or overdose. While we push for better mental health services, it's important to model a different kind of peer pressure: let's peer pressure people to get off drugs and get the help they need. Let's pressure our leaders to make sure that help is ready when people are ready to heal.

Dyi'lai'kei Bass is a junior at Meadowdale Career Technology Center in the Business Pathway.

Traysean Powell: 'I urge my peers to share their stories'

In 2024, it's essential for the community to recognize that many teenagers are grappling with significant mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, leading to an increase in reported mental health problems among youth. The community needs to understand the importance of open discussions about mental

health, encouraging a culture where students feel safe sharing their feelings and experiences without stigma.

Many students do not feel their mental health needs are adequately met within the school system. While some schools provide counseling services and programming aimed at promoting mental wellness, access to these resources can be inconsistent. Furthermore, the pressure of academic expectations often leaves little room for students to focus on their mental health, which can lead to feelings of stress and overwhelm. Schools need to actively integrate mental health education and support into their curriculum, reinforcing the importance of emotional well-being alongside academic achievement.

Among the tools that have been beneficial for managing mental health, students often highlight mindfulness practices, peer support groups, and access to mental health apps. Mindfulness techniques, such as guided meditation and breathing exercises, have shown to be effective in reducing stress levels and promoting emotional regulation. Additionally, peer support groups provide a safe space for students to share their experiences and offer mutual encouragement. However, many students feel that there is a lack of readily available mental health resources, particularly in rural areas or schools with limited funding.

To further support mental wellness among teenagers, there needs to be an increase in accessible mental health screenings and educational workshops on mental health topics. Many students are unaware of the signs of mental health issues and how to seek help. Workshops and programs that educate students on mental health awareness, coping strategies, and how to access resources can significantly benefit their overall well-being. Additionally, schools should explore partnerships with community organizations to expand

the availability of mental health services, providing resources that reach students both during and after school hours.

The voices of young people must be amplified to foster understanding and action surrounding youth mental health. By prioritizing mental wellness in schools, increasing community awareness, and addressing the gaps in resources, we can create a supportive environment that nurtures the mental health of all teenagers. I urge my peers to share their stories and advocate for the changes needed to ensure that every student has the ability to thrive emotionally and mentally in our schools and community.

Traysean Powell is a senior at MCTC.

Samya Camp: Pressure to succeed and perform perfectly in school can lead to anxiety, burnout

In 2024, I feel that communities need to realize that teenagers are facing elevated levels of anxiety and depression, mostly caused by social media, academic pressure, the lasting effects of COVID-19, family problems and body image issues.

While social media can give teenagers a connection to something, it also plays a role in having feelings of imperfection and cyberbullying. Multiple teenagers find mental health resources ineffective and hard to access, and the stigma surrounding mental health issues often prevents them from seeking help. To treat these challenges, communities must enhance the accessibility of mental health services, encourage open conversations to diminish stigma, and stimulate peer support groups within schools.

Schools crucially contribute to the mental health challenges faced by teenagers through many factors. The extreme academic pressure to succeed and perform perfectly in school can lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout. Many schools lack appropriate mental health resources and trained professionals, leaving students without that needed support. Further, bullying — both in-person and online — can harshly impact students' self-esteem and well-being. The fixed structure of the school environment often fails to provide students with mental health needs, making it extremely challenging for those struggling with anxiety or depression to thrive. Likewise, preliminary mental health education leaves students uninformed about acknowledging their issues while peer pressure can lead to harmful behaviors and heighten stress. Together, these aspects create an atmosphere that can negatively affect the mental health of teenagers.

Allison Gould, a 16-year-old student from Castle Rock, expressed her perspective on mental health [in a powerful essay](). She highlighted the anxiety and depression faced by teenagers, attributing these issues to social media, academic pressure, family problems, societal issues and body image issues. Allison underscored the contribution of schools to teenagers' mental health challenges, pointing out the extreme academic pressure, lack of mental health resources, and the impact of bullying on students' well-being.

I feel that my mental health needs are not being adequately addressed due to the lack of consideration from teachers and staff. While I understand that teaching can be stressful, it is crucial for educators to prioritize the well-being of students. The overwhelming volume of assignments and projects assigned simultaneously overlooks the fact that we have multiple classes and responsibilities outside of school. Meeting these expectations within the given timeframe is extremely challenging.

The most effective approach to dealing with mental health for me is adopting a hobby. Preoccupying my mind with reading, working out, learning new recipes and journaling helps me wonderfully. Volunteering or engaging in community activities can provide a sense of purpose and connection. Additionally, spending time in nature or doing creative activities like painting or playing a musical instrument can be very therapeutic.

While there are many different techniques that teenagers are missing out on, I would say the top two are time management skills and self-compassion. Teenagers have busy schedules with school, extracurricular activities, and after school jobs. They might not have learned effective time management strategies yet, and distractions like social media, bullying, and self-image can make it difficult to focus. Teenagers are often under a lot of pressure to succeed and fit in, which can lead to being overly critical of themselves.

Having to see someone so perfect online and then not being able to love what you see in the mirror can have a great impact on someone's mental state, especially in school.

Samya Camp is a junior at Meadowdale Career Technology Center.

Makenzee Clark: 'People need and deserve to be heard, seen, loved, respected, and supported'

Mental health needs to be talked about more often because it affects everyone's lives. Mental health is the reason why people deal with depression, anxiety, breakdowns, suicidal thoughts or plans, and it causes triggers and much more. Many people in the world hide the fact that they're struggling with poor mental health. People decide to stay silent and struggle because they think it's embarrassing or they

don't want to be a burden towards others. In my opinion, no one should be hiding how they actually feel just to be ignored. Instead, people need and deserve to be heard, seen, loved, respected, and supported. I know how important mental health is because numerous people in my life have done tragic things, including self harm or even attempted suicide.

The sad thing about poor mental health is how people are giving up before they can get help. It isn't because they're weak and emotional; it's because they're emotionally tired and they've gone through so much in life to the point they really can't take anymore of the pain. But those choices didn't solve their problems. Instead, it just made things worse for their families and their friends. There are so many reasons why these problems are happening, too: past experiences, trauma, stress, personal life, trust issues, deaths and other factors. If nothing is done about these problems, it will just get worse and more people will take their own lives.

To fix the problem, we need more people who are willing to actually listen and help us with our emotions and problems instead of judging, ignoring, dismissing, or just not having a concern. My idea is to rebuild and fix up an old building that would be used for affordable therapy and counseling for all ages. It should have at least one sensory room on every level of the building for if someone needs some time to calm down or take a break. I would also put sound canceling walls or acoustic foam panels in every room to block out the noise whether you're in a session or not. That way people can get the help and privacy they need. Most importantly, I would also hire professional therapists and counselors who are patient, kind, respectful and understanding, and who actually take the time to listen to our problems and help us. We will know our efforts are successful if

people talk about how they feel more often and if suicide rates go down.

– Mackenzee Clark is a junior at MCTC.

KK7 and JB1

We should address mental health. Mental health affects the community by not getting in the right mindset. The Impact that mental health affects is mainly in school. In my opinion it comes from a lot of stress on somebody. If no one is doing anything about this situation it would make mental health worse and may make people want to hurt themselves because of it. A good thing to address this problem is to try and make those who have mental health struggles feel better as a person and help those who still don't feel good. If the community gave us tax dollars to solve this problem we would build a place for them, like a safe place where they can express their feelings. This project will make life better for them and the community. **– Read aloud by Destiny Drake, edited by Darion Pace-Anders**

LI2: How It Feels to Have No One to Talk To

I respectfully ask our representatives to address the problem of youth mental health. I feel as if it doesn't get the attention it deserves. Mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people. Unfortunately, in recent years, we've seen significant increases in certain mental health disorders in youth, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Many factors shape the mental health of young people, from individual to societal level forces ([HHS](#)).This impacts people locally in my community because our young children are taking their lives due to bullying and having problems at home. A fact that shows how serious this problem

is 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24([mental health foundation](#)).

The fact that I stated shows the importance by explaining how many youth deal with mental health and most likely have no one to go to or just don't feel comfortable telling anybody they know. This affects people's everyday lives by parents having to lose their children and causing them to have mental health problems as well. This issue matters to me because as a person who has dealt with mental health I know how hard it can be to always have to hold in how you feel and have no one to talk to about it.

I feel as if we could get free therapy programs or something of that sort. Also just having a place they feel comfortable going to when they don't feel safe. This problem is connected to other people's struggles around the world because mental health awareness is a world wide thing and it is dealt with all around the globe.

This problem is occurring because most people deal with trauma in their childhood or are still dealing with trauma. Trauma such as physical abuse, sexual abuse,psychological or emotional abuse,verbal abuse. So many ways that can mess up someone's mind and affect their upbringing. The federal government works with the states to address these issues. To make this matter better it will require a team and people who actually want to make people feel better about themselves. An action that has to be taken to address this problem is awareness because I feel as if no one cares until it's someone close to them.This people can't be solved alone. I feel as if it would take a group of people to actually make a difference. We need our representatives to shed more light on how mental health affects so many people.If we don't do nothing about this issue it will continue to affect families around the world. If we succeed in slowing down the

suicide percentage not saying we could stop it completely but hopefully we can slow it down.