

Written Testimony

Before the
Senate Finance Committee
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June 5, 2025

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to address you today. My name is Joseph Spiccia. I am the Superintendent of the Wickliffe City School District located in Lake County and a member of the Board of Directors of the Ohio School-Based Health Alliance.

I am here to advocate in **support of restoring the \$20M allocated for funding of school-based health centers throughout the state and for a revision to the School Based Health Center's parental consent language to align it with Ohio law and current healthcare practice.**

I appreciate the Senate's willingness to fund school-based health centers at \$15 million but it is important to restore the funding to \$20 million over the biennium to support the growing demand for and continued growth of school-based health centers across our state.

The revision of the parental consent language is absolutely critical to include parents, legal guardians, grandparents as authorized by law, and other individuals authorized to consent to a child's care. This clarification will maximize a child's opportunity to access services through a school-based health center. Without this clarification, children — particularly those in kinship care, foster care, or other caregiving arrangements — would be unnecessarily blocked from receiving the school-based health center services they need to stay healthy, safe, and ready to learn. We cannot allow any child to be turned away from a school-based health center because of this language omission.

As you consider this request, please consider the story of the Family Resource Center of Wickliffe.

The Family Resource Center of Wickliffe opened in 2019. The Family Resource Center has a school-based health center that provides vital services to students and the community – including primary care, dental care, and mental health services to students and their families.

As a school-based health center, we have become the dental, medical, and mental health home for hundreds of our students. Students receive physicals (athletic and work), vaccinations, primary care, comprehensive dental care, and mental health services on our school campus in partnership with our community healthcare provider and Federally Qualified Health Center, Signature Health. Students also have access to other services, such as health related programs, therapeutic programs, and academic supports.

The value of the center is enormous. Because it is housed on campus, students have direct access to its services so students do not miss an extended amount of time from class, and families have

direct contact with providers. Since opening in 2019, graduation rates have improved, attendance rates have improved, more students are able to participate in extracurricular and work-based learning programs, and more students are receiving the help they need to be successful beyond the walls of the school. We are a school district of approximately 1,300 students and last year the center served nearly 1,000 students.

The center is a model for what a school district can and should become for its community and the expansion of the school-based health center model will improve outcomes for students, families, and entire communities.

I have worked in public education in Ohio for 47 years in communities ranging from high-wealth suburban districts to high poverty rural districts. In each of those districts a school-based health center would be an indispensable part of the school community that would provide benefits to students and families. The first and most important step for a student to become successful is for that student to be healthy, well fed, and to feel that the community cares about him/her. School-based health centers can provide all of those essential elements.

It is imperative that we fix the parental consent language and restore full funding for SBHCs.

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your consideration of this request.