

House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee  
House Bill 64 Testimony  
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Chardon Local Schools  
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Chairman Smith (Vice-Chair Schuring), Ranking Member Driehaus, and members of the Ohio House Finance Committee, my name is Michael Hanlon, and I am Superintendent of the Chardon Local School District located in Geauga County. My testimony today is intended to illustrate the need for continued financial support for mental health and trauma-based recovery services in our school district. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on House Bill 64, the biennial budget bill for Ohio.

Under the current biennial budget, Chardon Schools, along with the Geauga County Board of Mental Health and Recovery Services, received an appropriation of approximately \$750,000 to fund the Chardon Pilot Program. The objective of this program was to support the ongoing trauma-based recovery efforts in our school district that was shattered by an unthinkable tragedy - a school shooting that resulted in the deaths of three students, permanent injury to another student, and serious injury to others.

Recognizing the need for a long-term recovery model that would promote sustained growth and a return to school success, the District embarked on a tiered approach to services offered immediately after the tragedy and throughout the remainder of the 11-12 school year including:

- Trauma and Grief Groups
- SPEA (Suicide Prevention Education Alliance)
- Psychoeducational training of staff, students and community
- Individual & Group Support
- Safe Schools Hotline
- Stress Reduction Activities

During academic years 2012 - 2015, the District saw a focus on continued screening, assessment and delivery of specialized services. At this phase a diverse menu of group experiences was provided to students at both the Middle School and High School levels. Emphasis was placed on evidence-based practices and programs to address the major trauma seen at the various levels including;

- Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)
- Trauma and Grief Component Therapy for Adolescents (TGCT - A)
- Suicide Prevention Education Alliance (SPEA)
- Actively Caring 4 People (AC4P)
- Positive Behavior Support Systems (PBIS)
- Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)

While the trend data demonstrate the majority of students were served in year one with some success, the numbers further indicate an on-going need for services.

**Synopsis of Number of Students Served:**

<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014 to 3/12/2015</b>
<b>612+</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>350</b>

**Number of Students Referred for More Intensive Services:**

<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014 to 3/12/2015</b>
<b>52</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>

Since the tragedy, concerns related to self-harm and suicide have been on the forefront of the recovery process. The figures below indicate suicide attempts have greatly reduced ;however, there is an increase in other forms of self-harm. Moving forward, the focus of the proposed plan would be to address these specific issues, decreasing their intensity as well as addressing other trends currently evident throughout the district.

**Synopsis of Number of Students Suicide Attempts:**

<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014 to 3/12/2015</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>

**Synopsis of Number of Students Self-Harm:**

<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014 to 3/12/2015</b>
<b>25+</b>	<b>30+</b>	<b>35+</b>

Additional trends that would be addressed through the proposed continuation plan include the following:

- Continued post trauma regression triggered by external events, such as the shooter's escape or similar school shootings elsewhere (Marysville-Pilchuk)
- Documented increased anxiety of siblings of former and current high school students as well as displaying more aggressive behaviors and other mental health disorders.
- Requested support by staff experiencing trauma at Middle and High School levels
- Increased substance use at all grade levels leading to self-harm and other related behaviors.
- Increased students' disengagement in the learning process throughout Middle and High School levels; although evident in the upper elementary grades as well resulting in grade reductions.

Dr. David J Schonfeld, Director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, has been an on-going consultant with the District since the tragedy. His research supports the trend data discussed above and that it indicates an ongoing need for services over an extended period of time and to the degree outlined in the proposal.

**Request/Proposal:**

Chardon's proposal would address the needs identified above over the course of the next two school years. While continuation of research based therapeutic programs would occur, emphasis on resiliency training and positive supports would be developed and implemented. Specifically the proposal includes:

- Continuation of social worker support at current levels, reconfiguring the assignments to meet the needs at the lower grades with plans to decrease staff in 2016-2017 by at least 1 position
- Developing and implementing staff-based resiliency trauma services (EMDR - Eye Movement and Desensitization and Reprocessing)
- Further development of and implementation of summer institutes for all grades with a focus on resiliency and transitions
- Continuation with AC4P and PBIS initiatives throughout the District.
- Continuation with grief recovery groups at Middle and High School levels, include Elementary students identified for these services

**Cost Requests:**

- \$332,063 for cost of social workers for FY 15
- \$250,000 for cost of social workers for FY 16
- \$75,000 for the staff program EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)

The Chardon Local School District has made measured progress in post-trauma recovery. We appreciate your consideration for continued funding of this important proposal. Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 64, and I stand ready to address questions from the committee at the pleasure of the Chair.