



**Lorain County  
Public Health**

For the Health of Us All

February 19, 2020

Dave Burke, Chair,  
Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee  
The Ohio Senate.

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the committee:

My name is Dave Covell. I am the Health Commissioner in Lorain County. I am providing written testimony in support of SB 126, specifically for the proposed language changes that will expand Ohio Revised Code 5122.04 to include children under age 14, who are now dying by suicide at double the rate they did a decade ago.

Suicide is now the leading cause of death among Ohioans ages 10-14. A report released in November from the Ohio Department of Health showed that suicide deaths increased by 56% among Ohio youth ages 10-24 between 2007-2018, and is the leading cause of death among Ohioans ages 10-14 and the second leading cause of death among Ohioans ages 15-34.

Lorain County is a community of over 300,000 residents. We have been working together to try and prevent suicide as part of our Community Health Improvement Plan. Partners in the community work hard every day to identify young people in our county that are in distress. Intervening in these children's lives before it is too late can make all the difference in preventing suicides.

I support expanding Ohio Revised Code 5122.04 to allow for children younger than 14 who may be suicidal to receive a crisis risk assessment, even if parents are not immediately available to provide consent. The proposed update keeps the important language for youth ages 14 and older, and also allows for a crisis assessment for younger children when there is evidence that the child may be suicidal. The child's safety and well-being can be assessed by a professional while the professional continues to make a good-faith effort to connect with the parent or guardian.

We cannot wait to respond to a child in crisis. Also, Ohio cannot wait to address a trend of younger people dying by suicide. SB 126 updates the ORC to make it possible to save younger lives.

Thank you for considering my testimony today.