



February 19, 2020

RE: Senate Bill 126 – Proponent Testimony from the Lorain County Suicide Prevention Coalition

Dear Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee of the Ohio Senate:

Please accept this proponent testimony on behalf of the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Lorain County, which is convened by the Mental Health, Addiction and Recovery Services (MHARS) Board. We support Senate Bill 126, specifically 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, according to information from The Jason Foundation. (jasonfoundation.com/youth-suicide/facts-stats/)

Our team of mental health professionals, hospital representatives, schools, public agency partners, community members and neighbors, supports 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.

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. (odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/media-center/odh-news-releases/ohio-suicide-demographics-trends-report)

We cannot wait to respond to a child in crisis. Also, Ohio cannot wait to address a trend of younger people dying by suicide.

Thank you for the opportunity to help this proposal become reality, and for your good work to support the mental health of children!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Wolanski, MEd, LPCC-S

Child and Adolescent Services Director of the MHARS Board
Chair of the Lorain County Suicide Prevention Coalition
Member of the Children’s Subcommittee of the Lorain County Suicide Prevention Coalition

Mental Health, Addiction and Recovery Services (MHARS) Board of Lorain County

North Ridge Site: 1173 North Ridge Rd East, Suite 101 | Lorain | 44055 | 440-233-2020 | 440-233-2030 (fax)

Oberlin Avenue Site: 4950 Oberlin Ave. | Lorain | 44053 | 440-282-9920 | 440-282-9928 (fax)