



**Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
H.B. 110, Biennial Operating Budget FY 2022-2023**

**Amy Gordon, LSW, Executive Director and CEO
Communities In Schools of Ohio
March 4, 2021**

Communities In Schools of Ohio: Amendment HC0423 Summary

- **CIS:** Communities In Schools of Ohio - nonprofit that works with public schools and charter schools to help students remain in school and achieve academic success.
- **Previously funded amount:** \$200,000/year. Historically an earmarked program via the TANF Block Grant.
- **Requested amount:** \$500,000/year.
- **How it works:** CIS works to reduce non-academic barriers, address inequities, and support social-emotional needs by placing a full-time site coordinator in school all-day, every day to help students and families address these challenges.
- **Expansion:** Over the last two years, **CIS leveraged the TANF funding to expand its footprint from operating only in central Ohio serving at-risk students to now serving 37 schools across six communities in Ohio (Central Ohio, Dayton, Cleveland, Youngstown, Cincinnati, Toledo)** in the 2020-2021 school year.
- **Results:** In the 2018-2019 school year, CIS saw **83% of our focus students improve in academics, 71% improve in attendance, and 99% of CIS students stay in school.**

Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, thank you for the opportunity to offer interested party written testimony on House Bill 110, the State Operating Budget. I am Amy Gordon, Executive Director of Communities In Schools of Ohio.

I write to thank the legislature for your previous support, and to request an increased investment in Communities In Schools of Ohio (CIS), which has proven effective in stopping kids from regularly skipping school, dropping out of school, failing academically and ultimately, continuing the cycle of poverty, illiteracy and reliance on welfare for generations. We provide integrated, tailored student support systems in schools, all day, every day for those students at highest risk. We serve children who come to school hungry, homeless, without adequate clothing and often dealing with unimaginable trauma due to violence in their home or neighborhood. Statistics show that many of these children are not able to get to school regularly or to focus on their schoolwork when they are there. Communities In Schools addresses the multitude of factors that negatively impact a child's ability to succeed. We have implemented a national, evidence-based model in the state of Ohio with great success. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these needs, and we have pivoted to meet students and families where they are throughout this challenging time.

In the 2018-2019 school year, CIS served more than 13,000 students and 4,500 parents in 27 schools across the state. Our nonprofit, with a team of 41 full-time school site coordinators, has seen **83% of our focus students improve in academics, 71% improve in attendance, and 99% of CIS students stay in school.** Since the COVID-19 pandemic, CIS has seen an increase in needs including access to technology for online school, basic necessities such as food, housing and daily supplies, as well as a significant increase in social-emotional and mental health supports. We continue working to address these needs daily.

Over the last two years, **CIS leveraged the TANF funding of \$200,000 per fiscal year provided by the legislature in the last budget bill to expand our footprint from operating only in central Ohio to serve students at-risk of chronic absenteeism and dropping out, to now serving 37 schools across six communities in Ohio** in the 2020-2021 school year.

We have a budget amendment pending before your Committee that would provide \$500,000 in each fiscal year within Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' TANF Block Grant appropriation item, to continue bringing this model to more TANF-eligible students in need, increase overall academic success and improve graduation rates.

How does CIS achieve such high success rates?

CIS focuses on the key indicators of academic failure, starting with chronic absenteeism, which is defined as a child missing 10% or more during an academic year. It is a leading contributing factor for dropping out of school.¹ By sixth grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Attendance is impacted by multiple issues; however, the problem is particularly acute for students who face the most significant barriers, including students from low-income families, students of color, and students with disabilities. Chronic absenteeism rates are closely linked to high drop-out rates. Nationally, 63.2% of high school dropouts are not currently in the workforce², and approximately 75% of all crimes are committed by high school drop outs³. The negative effects on families and communities are incalculable.

This CIS evidenced-based model employs an innovative, holistic approach to addressing both the academic and nonacademic needs of students, working with the highest-risk populations to help students succeed, which is closely aligned with your priorities here in the General Assembly.

With increased investment by your Committee in our program, CIS will continue to provide our impactful programs to the at-risk youth who need our support, and to expand to other high-need families and communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Gordon, Executive Director and CEO
Communities In Schools of Ohio
6500 Busch Blvd. Suite 105
Columbus, Ohio 43229
614-268-2472
www.ciskids.org

¹ <https://www.attendanceworks.org/absences-add-up/>

² https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/figures/fig_24.asp?referrer=figures

³ Smiley, Travis. "Fact Sheet: Is the Dropout Problem Real?" Travis Smiley Reports. Accessed February 26, 2014.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/tavissmiley/tsr/education-under-arrest/fact-sheet-drop-out-rates-of-african-american-boys/>