
Prevention Action Alliance

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Ohio Senate Health Committee Prevention Action Alliance May 5, 2021

Good Morning, Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written interested party testimony in consideration of Substitute House Bill 110, the state budget. My name is Jean-Philippe Dorval, and I am the Advocacy and Public Policy Liaison for Prevention Action Alliance (PAA). PAA is a 32-year-old statewide nonprofit organization based in Columbus, Ohio. We are dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. PAA offers a wealth of resources, training services, grants, and advocacy opportunities for those who are active in the prevention and mental health fields.

As Ohio recovers from the social-emotional toll of the pandemic, we must recognize prevention as an essential part of the continuum of care and invest in critical prevention services, so we can effectively address and prevent resulting behavioral health problems. We must also specifically consider the effect that the pandemic has had on our children as they continue navigating online classes, social isolation, and the overall stress regarding the virus. The Student Wellness and Success Funds (SWSF) are a key step to helping our students through this difficult time by meeting the developmental needs of every student, every school, every family, and every community.

We applaud the House of Representatives for their effort to propose an updated school funding formula as part of HB 110. However, we are concerned by the approach of combining the Student Wellness and Success Funds with the Economically Disadvantage funds into the Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid (DPIA) fund for several reasons.

1. **Overall, funding is reduced.** The proposed DPIA fund is appropriated at \$620 million, whereas the SWSF and Economic Disadvantage Pupil fund were each funded at \$400 million (\$800 combined). Net loss= \$180 million.
2. The proposed DPIA fund relies on the Governor's proposed appropriation for SWSF funds but distributes funds solely on the number of low-income students identified in each school and the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Whereas the SWSF provides a base funding allocation to each school plus an additional per student payment

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tiered by quartile based on a federal poverty index. Most schools will LOSE funding in this area.

3. While unintended, this approach stigmatizes social-emotional development, mental health, and prevention as limited to low-income students and families. Changing the conversation from every student to only disadvantaged students.
4. Gains made through universal prevention, expanded access to mental health consultation and services, and family engagement will now compete with resources to support reduced class sizes, reading intervention, public pre-school for four-year-old children, and security and (physical plant) safety. This dilutes and supplants SWSF activities likely resulting in lost access to prevention and mental health services in schools.
5. Prevention services and the coalitions that provide them are no longer listed as a potential use or partner for the DPIA/SWSF. This oversight weakens this funding measure tremendously and would lead to decreased social-emotional support for every student.
6. The Base Cost Funding Formula includes Social/Emotional/Security/Life Support as one of several factors captured within the Instructional and Student Supports category (15% of Base Cost) However, this is simply a formula used to develop the base cost. The unrestricted nature of the base funding does not guarantee use to support activities or initiatives as defined under SWSF.

To fix these issues, we strongly recommend restoring R.C 3317.26 Student Wellness and Success authorization language and funding to the Governor's as introduced version.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as an interested party for Substitute House Bill 110, and I can be contacted through the chair's office should the committee have any questions.