October 11th, 2019

Dear Honorable Chairman Lipps and Members of the Health Committee,

On behalf of [Committee for Children](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.cfchildren.org_&d=DwMFAg&c=kRQx1TXm_68pneFHvOZEGQ&r=Dly83ofaqp6plphJ5ofLMZvKfBAneEzhLilzApuKxtA&m=BdavcvlSbjvitxvyOfoNdw_gN9WnZnWTu3p0gXQX8yw&s=moHlo0dPwX_s50W0RaoBJzBcQmwiDJAr4QBHfR3giJ0&e=), thank you for your time in reviewing our testimony in favor of Ohio House Bill 321 (Erin’s Law). Committee for Children is a forty-year-old nonprofit organization with a mission to ensure that all children thrive socially, emotionally, and academically and is one of the leaders in the field of social-emotional learning and child sexual abuse prevention. Committee for Children is proud to have supported Ohio schools and school systems with our evidence-based social-emotional learning curriculum, Second Step, with our optional evidence-based Child Protection Unit that schools can use for instruction and training on child sexual abuse prevention. We also run public awareness campaigns on child sexual abuse prevention. For comprehensive guidance on the subject, you might wish to visit: <https://www.earlyopenoften.org/>. For more targeted guidance for families and educators, just to get started, please see our Hot Chocolate Talk campaign: <https://www.cfchildren.org/resources/child-abuse-prevention/>. The efforts are meant to educate the greater public on child sexual abuse prevention, as everyone has a role to play in protecting our young people.

For schools specifically, research shows that best practice in child protection involves training adults and teaching students skills to recognize, refuse, and report sexual abuse.1 Erin’s Law in Ohio does just that by requiring annual age-appropriate instruction on how to prevent sexual abuse in kindergarten through sixth grade, and instruction on sexual violence prevention for grades seven through twelve, in addition to incorporating child sexual abuse in-service training for school district employees. If there is opportunity to work on this bill, we would suggest the inclusion of making sexual abuse prevention instruction evidence-based in order to ensure the most successful outcomes for students. Irrespective, Committee for Children supports HB321.

Child sexual abuse prevention is something lacking in Ohio’s current requirements for instruction on personal safety and assault prevention, but it’s sorely needed.

In 2015, 20% of reported victims of child abuse and neglect in Ohio were sexually abused.2 More recently, many local cases of sexual abuse have come to light, such as in the Springboro Community School District. Across the nation, child sexual abuse and assault currently affect 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 20 boys with those affected often experiencing long lasting negative effects,3 such as depression, self-harming behaviors, and substance abuse, to name a few.

Erin’s law is not sex education. Rather, it comprises comprehensive safety lessons, and even so, the law provides an opt-out if parents or guardians would still prefer their child not participate.

Thank you for your time in considering the many benefits of Erin’s law. Variations of Erin’s Law (or the equivalent) have been adopted in 37 states. We look forward to Ohio joining the fold.

Sincerely,

Jordan Posamentier on behalf of Committee for Children

1. Finkelhor, D., & Dziuba-Leatherman, J. (1995). Victimization prevention programs: A national survey of children’s exposure and reactions. Child Abuse & Neglect, 19(2), 129–139.  
   Nickerson, A., Tulledge, J., Manges, M., Kesselring, K., Parks, T., et al. (2019). Randomized controlled trial of the Child Protection Unit: Grade and gender moderators of CSA prevention concepts in elementary students. Child Abuse & Neglect, 96, 1-12.[https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104101](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__doi.org_10.1016_j.chiabu.2019.104101&d=DwMFAg&c=kRQx1TXm_68pneFHvOZEGQ&r=Dly83ofaqp6plphJ5ofLMZvKfBAneEzhLilzApuKxtA&m=BdavcvlSbjvitxvyOfoNdw_gN9WnZnWTu3p0gXQX8yw&s=fKULXIxuDTEha4TW-WAYqnFBcAlq0gsHSiFnIqV1ars&e=)
2. Child Welfare League of America. (2017). *Ohio’s Children 2017*. Retrieved from <http://www.cwla.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/OHIO.pdf>
3. Finkelhor, D., Shattuck, A., Turner, H. A., & Hamby, S. L. (2014). The lifetime prevalence of child sexual abuse and sexual assault assessed in late adolescence. Journal of Adolescent Health, 55(3), 329–333.