



1N5.org
3975 Erie Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45208
513.814.3007

One in five teens and adults
suffer from mental illness.

1N5 is a 501(c)(3) non-profit org
supporting mental health awareness
and education in our community.

Stop the Stigma.
Start the Conversation.

June 24, 2024

Chairwoman Pavliga
Ohio House of Representatives
Behavioral Health Committee

Dear Chairwoman Pavliga,

Thank you for allowing us to submit testimony in support of the proposed changes to HB571, which adds requirements for schools to promote 988, the national suicide prevention hotline. My name is Nancy Eigel-Miller, Founder and Executive Director of 1N5, a non-profit organization in Cincinnati dedicated to preventing suicide by erasing the stigma around mental illness and promoting optimal mental wellness. We work with over 180 schools and 75 community organizations across Southwest Ohio to provide prevention education. In addition to our work in schools, we are actively involved in regional Suicide Prevention Coalitions for the counties in and around Cincinnati.

Working in this space, we witness daily the vast impact that mental health disorders and suicidal ideation have on our students and the adults in their lives. We've seen firsthand the devastating impact of a growing number of suicides in our region – not only impacting those who attempt or die by suicide, but the family members, friends, witnesses, and community members who care for each one of these individuals.

We have consistently supported several community-level efforts to reduce suicide, one being our intentional promotion of 988. Our goal since the establishment of the hotline has been to raise awareness of the resource and reduce stigma around utilizing the number, as well as educate community members on the signs of a mental health crisis which might require them to call 988. We believe that the increased awareness of 988 has played an important role in saving many lives.

Though we believe strongly in the effectiveness of 988, we have much work to do to raise awareness of the resource. A 2023 Pew Study found that only 13% of US adults had heard of the 988 suicide hotline nine months after its launch. The study also found notable discrepancies in 988 awareness based on race, college education and annual income. Twice as many white, non-Hispanic people had heard of 988 compared to their black, non-Hispanic counterparts. Those with a college education and those making \$50,000 or more also had a greater awareness of 988. It is imperative that we take steps to continue to promote this vital resource, especially to underserved communities.

When it comes to suicidal ideation, one of our most vulnerable populations is our young people. Not only do we know that 75% of mental health disorders present before age 24, as many as 1 in every 3 teens now report symptoms of a mental health condition, putting our young people especially at risk. The challenges and demands for today's teens continue to increase. The combination of academic pressure, overscheduling, social media exposure, lack of sleep, college applications, first romantic relationships, and transitions into adulthood is difficult for anyone to manage, even more so for someone already experiencing a mental health disorder. We must provide extra support to this vulnerable group of young people and reduce barriers to accessing care.



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The changes proposed in HB571 will have a significant impact on students by raising awareness for 988 and ensuring our young people are aware of the life-saving resources that 988 offers those who are approaching a mental health crisis. Additionally, the requirements for schools are relatively easy to implement and allow schools to utilize already-existing materials to spread this messaging. In fact, 1N5 already partners with schools in our region to distribute these resources on a regular basis, and schools are currently able to access resources free of charge. 1N5 will continue to support Ohio schools with the implementation of required resources upon passage of the bill.

We thank the House of Representatives for their consideration of this bill, which takes a vital step toward reducing suicide deaths for young Ohioans.

We welcome any questions or concerns. Please feel free to contact me at Nancy_Miller@1N5.org or 513-814-3007 for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nancy Eigel-Miller'.

Nancy Eigel-Miller

Founder and Executive Director, 1N5

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