



Proponent Testimony: SB 108
Ohio Senate Health Committee
Tim Grady, Executive Director
Boys Hope Girls Hope of Northeastern Ohio
May 2, 2023

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Committee it is my privilege to offer this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 108 which would establish and regulate scholars residential centers.

My name is Tim Grady and I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of the Boys Hope Girls Hope of Northeastern Ohio for the past 12 years. I can say unequivocally that SB 108 would provide profoundly needed steps to ensure our organization is properly and appropriately regulated by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services.

Because I know our organization isn't a household name, I would like to give you some background about our organization overall and our chapter specifically.

Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHGH) was founded in 1977 by Father Paul Sheridan, S.J., an educator in St. Louis, who created Boys Hope Girls Hope to provide opportunity where it would otherwise not exist for children living in poverty. Today, Boys Hope Girls Hope has fifteen affiliates across the United States as well as three locations in Latin America. Each share a common mission but operate as independent agents of hope.

The mission of Boys Hope Girls Hope (BHGH) is to nurture and guide motivated young people in need to become well-educated, career ready men and women for others.

We believe that everyone has the potential to be successful, and Boys Hope Girls Hope creates the opportunity. For more than three decades, we have pioneered best-in-class programs that provide at-risk young people with the consistent, loving support they need to grow into successful, thriving adults. Committing to their journey all the way from middle-school through college and beyond, we provide a stable, nurturing community where young people are fully championed – academically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially – providing the foundation they need to transform their lives.

Boys Hope Girls Hope of Northeastern Ohio (BHGH) was formally incorporated in 1986. Upon its inception the organization was simply 'Boys Hope' serving five adolescent boys from the Akron-

area with extraordinary need and extraordinary circumstances with a safe and nurturing home, an empowering community, and a college preparatory education. In 2003, the organization opened its doors to young women by establishing a girls home and consolidated our facilities into a single location on a century-old family estate in Garfield Heights – becoming Boys Hope Girls Hope.

In January 2007, the growing realities of poverty and a lack of quality educational opportunities for Northeast Ohio’s children in need compelled our Board of Directors to reach beyond our hallmark Residential Program and initiate a mission-driven community-based response that would allow us to reach more young people in need. Known today as the Academy Program, this initiative serves motivated children that have been limited in achieving their potential due to enrollment in under-resourced schools and a lack of access to the critical academic, character and personal developmental opportunities that are needed to prepare them for post-secondary and career success. Modeled on the holistic approach of our time-tested Residential Program, the Academy Program is in its twelfth year of providing each Scholar served with a decade-long partnership beginning the summer before 6th grade and continuing through high school graduation, post-secondary education and career launch.

On June 1, 2019, we opened our 21,000 sq.ft. Rajan Center which represents the next stage of our program’s evolution and ability to serve the holistic needs of the children from poverty we serve. With our new facility, we now have the capacity to conduct more formal programming with our Scholars than ever before. Scholars can now come to BHGH when they are seeking a safe and welcoming place to study, meet with a volunteer tutor, pursue their personal interests in our innovation lab or art studio or enjoy the gymnasium, fitness center or Haslam Field. We also continue to strengthen our post-Secondary support services to the fastest growing segment of our continuum, including the launch of our Post-Secondary Residential Fellowship Program in February 2020.

Over the past year, we served 185 young people (51 middle schoolers, 64 high schoolers and 70 Post-Secondary Scholars) through our long-term continuum of support and partnership.

The children served by our programs are living in poverty in both Cuyahoga (76%) and Summit (24%) Counties with the majority living in some of the most depressed neighborhoods in our region. The demographic composition of our Scholars is 78% African American, 5% Caucasian, 5% Latino, 2% Asian and 10% Bi-racial children. Many of our Scholars will be the first in their families to attend college, and for some, the first to graduate from high school. While their families want to see them succeed, they look to BHGH for partnership and guidance that otherwise would not exist to ensure their children are empowered by the critical opportunities necessary to reach their full potential.

Our hallmark Residential Program addresses the fundamental right of each child to have a safe, nurturing and family-like home environment which provides the support needed for them to achieve their full potential. Our Residential Program provides a long-term home with holistic around-the-clock care and a college preparatory education for up to twenty promising children

(6th-12th grades) with extraordinary need. Our residential philosophy contends that the combination of a quality education, a safe and secure home, emotional development support, and a consistent routine will provide Scholars with the values and opportunities they need to reach their full potential in life. Scholars live in one of our three homes here at our Garfield Heights campus and attend exceptional private college preparatory schools whose missions embody the same holistic values that BHGH was founded upon. Upon entering the program, BHGH first responds to the clear and basic needs of the child. This includes the provision of a safe home, food, clothing, and healthcare for our Scholars. BHGH then ensures therapeutic counseling services are either continued or initiated by BHGH for the child, coupled with support from BHGH's highly trained staff, so they are supported in living with the traumatic stress they were under in their previous situation. Once these basic needs are met, BHGH moves forward with the Scholar to help them understand what they can achieve and how to reach their goals.

Our Residential Scholars have daily structured routines that include their regular study and tutoring hours where they work with tutors and BHGH's professional academic team on homework and test preparation, family style meals, assigned household chores, participation in recreational activities, volunteering at school and on campus, and they engage in extracurricular activities and sports at their school just as any middle or high school student would. The coupling of a nurturing home and excellent education leads to consistent structure and routine-based conditions that are both empowering and nurturing to Scholars. During their 4-6 year placement in the Residential Program, we have seen Scholars realize and achieve their potential time and time again. All our Residential Scholars also fully participate in BHGH's out-of-school-time Academy Program.

With all that background I'd like to share with you exactly why SB 108 is so important to the BHGH of Northeastern Ohio.

Going back to our inception in the early 1980s the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) has served as the department charged with our regulatory oversight through a licensing process that requires us to be recertified every two years.

Currently, BHGH of Northeastern Ohio, like the BHGH chapter in Cincinnati, is classified within the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) as "*Children's Residential Centers, Group Homes, and Residential Parenting Facilities*". While these facilities serve a critical role and deliver on their own unique mission, they have virtually nothing in common with what we do at the Boys Hope Girls Hope of Northeastern Ohio.

For instance, the stated purpose of OAC 5101:2, which is the code which outlines the rules for our current classification, is "to protect children and young adults who sadly find themselves in need of a home or treatment facility and must be placed under the care and supervision (usually guardianship) of others who are not their parents or legal guardians." As I've outlined, the academic scholarship-based mission here at Boys Hope Girls Hope is fundamentally different from the primary definition upon which all OAC 5101:2 is predicated.

Nearly every child, young adult, and group home or residential center regulated under OAC 5101:2 receives funding under Title IV of the Social Security Act administered US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). BHGH programs receive no such funding, rather we are funded through the generosity and philanthropy of our private donors and partners.

Each scholar who enters the BHGH program elects to do so and enters with the approval of their parent or guardian. Often BHGH Scholars go home on the weekends and their parents or guardians are invested and involved from the very beginning.

As you can imagine the process for certification or recertification of *Children's Residential Centers, Group Homes, and Residential Parenting Facilities* is intense and with dozens of specific regulations and dozens of sub-regulations within each category. For the facilities given the unique and critical role they play in the lives of those children and young adults, we agree with the stringent standards in place. However, those regulations simply don't apply to the Boys Hope Girls Hope chapters in Ohio and the result is we are often burdened with up to six figure costs annually to comply with the departmental regulations, which is a substantial percentage of our annual operating budget.

We have built a strong rapport with the outstanding staff at ODJFS – in fact ODJFS has served as a partner as we've worked with Members of the General Assembly on what you know as SB 108. That partnership has helped create language that is tailored for the unique mission and work of Boys Hope Girls Hope while also ensuring the appropriate safety, security, reporting, and documentation necessary to the care and programs we provide our young men and women.

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members as I close, I again want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to share with you more about Boys Hope Girls Hope of Northeastern Ohio and why we strongly and unequivocally support SB 108. There's no doubt this legislative will have a positive impact and further allow BHGH of Northeastern Ohio to continue to deliver on our mission of creating hope and opportunity for promising young people residing in Northeastern Ohio. I look forward to continuing to work with you, this Committee and Members of the Ohio Senate on SB 108 and I appreciate your time.

Sincerely

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