



The Ohio Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

<http://www.acteohio.org/>

Chairperson Lehner, Vice Chair Brenner, Ranking Member Fedor and Members of the Ohio Senate Education Committee:

My name is Brian Yusko. I am an Associate Dean in the College of Education and Human Services at Cleveland State University. Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee.

I serve as the chair of the advocacy committee and president elect for the Ohio Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (OACTE), a state affiliate of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. I also represent the collective position of public institutions represented by the State University Education Deans (SUED) and private institutions represented by the Ohio Association of Private Colleges for Teacher Education (OAPCTE). Our professional associations represent over 50 approved teacher preparation programs across the state. I am here to convey our support for the passage of SB 121 to establish Health Education Standards for the state of Ohio.

As you know from other testimony, Ohio is the only state that does not have a set of health education standards, and health is the only required academic content area without standards in Ohio. Our organizations support state policies that establish curriculum aligned with the specialized knowledge and skills identified by professional associations. Statewide curriculum standards facilitate university faculty members' ability to prepare teacher candidates effectively so they are able to design standards-based instruction for districts throughout the state. The absence of such standards makes it impossible for teacher preparation programs to guide candidates appropriately to address the health inequities and disparities currently challenging Ohio. Providing a much-needed framework for individual districts will ensure that our programs are effectively preparing teachers to address specific health topics of importance to Ohio citizens.

We believe it is incontrovertible that the P-12 education system needs to educate primary and secondary students to maximize their chances of living a healthy lifestyle. We are confident that health education will lead to healthier citizens and ultimately save taxpayer dollars currently being spent on addressing health crises in our state through services and treatment. What we are doing now clearly is not working, as evidenced by the fact that Ohio ranks in the lower quartile in almost every state health ranking.

Consistent with the position of the Ohio Association of Health, Recreation, and Dance, our teacher preparation programs are already addressing the health needs of Ohio's students. Our teacher preparation programs are now required to provide our candidates with information about the magnitude of the opioid epidemic and share resources with candidates. Recent legislation now mandates that programs incorporate content about trauma-informed care to help educators work with the whole child. The Ohio Department of Education has adopted social-emotional learning standards to guide the work of educators in addressing social and mental health issues.

While we recognize the importance of this health-related content in teacher preparation, we believe it is not effective to address health issues in such a piecemeal fashion rather than dealing coherently with the full spectrum of health-related issues. In the absence of health standards, health education faculty are left to identify their own priorities, leading to an inconsistent content knowledge base. In early childhood programs where health education may be the most crucial, we have seen the removal of health pedagogy courses, often justified by the absence of statewide health standards.

Health education standards are a simple and inexpensive way to have a powerful impact on the health of Ohio's citizens. Health standards would clearly outline what students need to learn and will provide much needed guidance for local districts, health teachers and general education teachers covering health education topics. Health education standards would provide a valuable resource for teacher educators to guide Ohio's future health teachers. Health education standards will have a positive impact on the state of Ohio.

It is far past time for the General Assembly to approve the creation of health education standards to provide guidance to teachers and schools, to ensure appropriate preparation of health teachers, and to ensure that Ohio's children learn to live healthy lifestyles.

We urge you to vote in favor of SB 121. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us directly at [b.yusko@csuohio.edu](mailto:b.yusko@csuohio.edu).

Sincerely,

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