

Local Matters

PARTNERING for HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Ohio Senate Education Committee

Senator Peggy Lehner, Chair

Senator Lou Terhar, Vice Chair

Senator Teresa Fedor, Ranking Member

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 121

Regards creation of health education standards

Sarah Miller, Local Matters

October 1, 2019

Good morning, Chairwoman Lehner, Vice Chair Terhar, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the committee. My name is Sarah Miller and I am here today on behalf of Central Ohio nonprofit Local Matters to testify in support of Senate Bill 121, regarding adoption of health education standards.

Local Matters' perspective on health education standards is based on eleven years of work in food education and access programming. We understand that comprehensive nutrition education is a key element in decreasing the rate of chronic diet-related disease in the next generation. Therefore, we affirm that health education standards be established across Ohio - the only state without health education standards - as a building block in bringing universal evidence-based, up-to-date nutrition education to K-12 students.

Through our work, Local Matters sees how diet-related disease takes an immense toll on Ohioans. The detriments can be seen from an individual to a societal level among measures of public health, economic stability, and national security.

In Ohio today, over 33% of children have enough excess weight to put them at risk of developing early-onset diabetes and other diet-related disease.¹ That means 1 in 3 of our children will likely spend their lives dealing with often preventable diagnoses. The effect this has on not just children, but also their guardians and families, is immeasurable.

The economic cost of diet-related disease is equally staggering. In Ohio, the cost of healthcare required to treat diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease alone (all of which are

¹ Trust for America's Health & Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2017). Ohio State Obesity Data, Rates and Trends. *The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America*. Retrieved June 5, 2018, from <https://stateofobesity.org/states/oh/>.

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classified as diet-related diseases) is estimated at \$6.36 billion.² For Ohio's businesses, the estimated cost is even higher: between \$43 and \$57 billion is lost through decreased workplace productivity each year.³ As these diet-related diseases become more common, the cost to Ohioans and Ohio's businesses will certainly increase.

Further, diet-related disease has a direct impact on Ohioan's military readiness. Nationally, 31% of youth are disqualified from military service because of the associated health challenges with obesity.⁴ In a report from Council for A Strong America, the authors state that: "As the military works to reduce obesity among its members, policymakers can help prevent obesity among children and school-aged youth by promoting policies that encourage healthy eating and physical activity."⁵

Senate Bill 121 is an example of policy that does just that. When using established, evidence-based health education standards, educators are able to teach the skills students need to successfully navigate our complex food system. Local Matters encourages the Senate Education Committee to make a move that will affect the lives of our community and our children in a very tangible way.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony submitted by:

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Local Matters is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Central Ohio working to build healthy communities through food education, access, and advocacy.

² Ohio Department of Health. (2014). *Ohio's Plan to Prevent and Reduce Chronic Disease: 2014-2018*. Retrieved June 14, 2019, from <https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/chronic-disease/data-publications/Ohios-Plan-to-Prevent-and-Reduce-Chronic-Disease-2014-2018>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Maxey, H., Bishop-Josef, S., Goodman, B. (2018). *Unhealthy and Unprepared: National security depends on promoting healthy lifestyles from an early age*. Council for A Strong America. Retrieved October 30, 2018, from <https://www.strongnation.org/articles/737-unhealthy-and-unprepared>.

⁵ Ibid.