



MIKE DEWINE

GOVERNOR OF OHIO

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August 23, 2019

Dear Superintendent,

On July 18th, I signed our state's two-year operating budget. I am very proud of the investments this budget makes into Ohio's people. As I travel the state, teachers often tell me that their students are struggling with immense needs, both academically and emotionally. Regardless of socio-economic status, geography, or community, Ohio's children are facing unique and unprecedented challenges, and they are bringing these challenges into their classrooms.

That's why my executive budget proposal included a brand-new investment in Ohio's students, called Student Wellness and Success. This new, \$675 million fund is designed to meet the social and emotional needs of all of Ohio's students.

Because every community faces different challenges and adversities, these funds are extremely flexible, allowing school districts to design programs and purchase services that meet the specific needs of their student body. Student Wellness and Success funding can be spent on eleven different categories of services and programs, including mental and physical health services, community liaisons, the City Connects program, before and after school programs, and more.

While these funds were intentionally designed to give school districts maximum flexibility, my hope is that these funds will be used to establish new programs and expand on existing behavioral and physical health care services in schools and wrap supports—such as mentoring and afterschool programs—around our students. For example:

- Communities that lack access to healthcare services may choose to retrofit existing building space into a community health clinic and contract with a local health system to provide clinical care for students and their families. Districts such as Cincinnati Public Schools and Wickliffe City Schools have excelled in providing healthcare services to their students.
- Communities experiencing high rates of mental illness may opt to partner with their ADAMH board or a community-based treatment provider to ensure students have access to behavioral health services right in their school. Alexander Local Schools in Athens County partners with both local behavioral health providers and children services to meet the mental health needs of their students.
- Still other communities that lack safe afterschool options for students may choose to partner with afterschool providers—such as Boys & Girls Clubs or Afterschool All Stars—to create programs for their students. Wooster City Schools and Georgetown Exempted Village Schools have used afterschool programs as a critical tool to keep students safe and engaged after school hours.

In addition to Student Wellness and Success funding, schools will also benefit from \$20 million in dedicated prevention education funding. Prevention education funds will provide schools—in collaboration with local prevention partners—with proven curricula and programming for each

grade-band. Local ESCs will also provide school personnel with free professional development on prevention education.

I encourage you to view these resources as an opportunity to create a continuum of care that meets the needs of all students. For example, prevention funds can help you implement universal prevention strategies, such as social emotional skill development, that benefit all students. Student Wellness and Success funds then allow you to provide behavioral health and other services to students with elevated risk factors and diagnosed needs.

I know that countless schools are creatively using operating funds to meet the emotional, developmental, and academic needs of their students. These funds can supplement existing investments and ensure that every Ohio student has access to the services they need to thrive, because for too many students, school is their only refuge in a turbulent world.

I believe that these Student Wellness and Success funds will give all Ohio children an opportunity to grow and succeed. I encourage you or a staff member to attend our upcoming Building Resiliency: A Pediatric Mental Health Summit on September 26, 2019 in Dayton, Ohio. The Summit will provide school personnel with additional information on Student Wellness and Success, as well as strategies to increase resiliency in students. More information is available at www.governor.ohio.gov/summit.

Thank you for your dedication to Ohio's children. I look forward to learning about the innovative ways you will serve students with these new funds. Best of luck for a safe and successful school year.

Very respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike DeWine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mike DeWine
Governor
State of Ohio