

Testimony for Hearing on S.B. 246  
Finance Committee  
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I am Shawn Henry, Executive Director of OCALI -- the Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence. I am pleased to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 246, sponsored by Senator Lehner, to establish the "Safe Act" to strengthen the requirement that each public school implement a positive behavioral intervention and supports framework.

For those members who may not be familiar with OCALI, it was established by the legislature in 2005, to serve individuals with autism and low incidence disabilities. Through this statute, OCALI has continued to serve over a decade as the state's clearinghouse of information, professional development, and technical assistance for autism and low incidence disabilities, including visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic disability, multiple disabilities, other health impairment, and traumatic brain injury. At the core of OCALI's work is the belief that all people can live their best lives for their whole lives. OCALI works to inspire change and promote access to make this possible.

OCALI is a trusted source of high quality information, facilitation, professional development, and technical assistance to ensure families, educators, and service providers are equipped to effectively care for, support, educate, employ, or work with individuals with disabilities. OCALI's organizational structure includes nine Centers -- Center for the Young Child, Family Center, Autism Center, Autism Certification Center, Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Materials Centers, Teaching Diverse Learners Center, Universal Design for Learning Center, Lifespan Transitions Center, and the Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness. Collectively the Centers focus on local and statewide capacity building while also strengthening policies and resources that guide services and supports in all 88 counties, all 50 states, and across the globe.

All of OCALI's Centers interact with state and local partners in education, including districts, schools, parents, teachers, and students. Our interest in this bill stems from these interactions, where we are daily hearing from teams, schools, and districts, struggling to support students with challenging behaviors. Two Centers in particular, the Autism Center and the Universal Design for Learning Center, provide professional development and training on best practices for classroom teaching and management, resources to help develop educational environments to support all learners, 1:1 teacher coaching, and student specific consultations. The Autism Center also conducts two team trainings, Expect Success Challenging Behavior and Preschool Autism Training Series. Attendance at these trainings increases annually, reflecting the desire of educators to have the tools to meet the needs of students. The program directors of these two Centers are members of the **Ohio Department of Education's** Statewide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Network, enabling OCALI to stay informed and offer a partnership role in the PBIS work. Thanks to the collective work of the network, Ohio has the potential to successfully employ PBIS statewide.

As you may know, PBIS is not a specific curriculum, strategy, or intervention. Rather, PBIS is a framework, a way to help schools think about, organize, and implement evidence-based practices to positively impact student outcomes, such as discipline, behavior, and academics. The PBIS framework has three tiers, or levels. Tier 1 focuses on the whole school and all students. From the bus to the cafeteria to the classroom, Tier 1

encourages positive behavior across all environments, for all students. Tier 1 should be in place before schools move on to Tier 2. Tier 2 is for those students who aren't responding to that foundational level and may need additional interventions or supports. Once Tier 1 and 2 are in place, a school can implement Tier 3. Tier 3 is reserved for those students who aren't responding to Tier 1 and 2, and exhibit behavior that may be highly disruptive or even dangerous.

It cannot be overstated that these Tiers are intended to be hierarchical – they build on one another. Without a strong Tier 1, Tiers 2 and 3 will not work. Research shows fidelity to the framework when developing the first tier is essential, which is why we support this bill. It's emphasis on the foundational level, making sure that all teachers, including teachers in training, understand positive behavioral interventions, know how to collect and utilize data, and have effective ways to respond to unwanted behavior, all of which are key to implementing a good Tier 1 wherever they teach.

Experts in the implementation of PBIS note that 80-90 percent of a school's time implementing PBIS should be spent on Tier 1-impacting all students educated in that school. Tier 2, 8-10 percent of the school's planning time and for students needing Tier 3 intervention, 1-3 percent. I would suggest that if you interviewed a teacher in a classroom without a PBIS framework in place, they would state that their greatest amount of classroom time and frustration is spent addressing behaviors with Tier 3 students.

OCALI is frequently asked to consult with schools and teams when a student is exhibiting challenging behavior, whether or not they have autism. When we arrive, the teacher and building administration feel like they have exhausted their options, parents are frustrated, and the student is not experiencing academic or social success. They often want OCALI to help design a Tier 3 strategy; however, we commonly find there is no Tier 1 or Tier 2 in place. The student may not need a more intensive intervention, such as in Tier 3, instead they need the school to implement Tier 1 and Tier 2. We support this bill as it strengthens the existing requirement that schools implement the entire framework and clarifies expectations around this.

In the 2017 Annual Report, the Ohio PBIS Network cites the correlation between fidelity to PBIS implementation and the reduction in behaviors in those Ohio schools that are engaged in the PBIS work. Schools recognized for their work and achieving gold or silver status reported the greatest reductions in school expulsion, suspension and an increase in school attendance and social acceptance. In a 2012 study it was reported that administrators saved almost 16 days of administrative time and a reduction in office referrals. This data proves students thrive in a positive school environment, teachers achieve greater classroom management and success.

***To support the Ohio Safe Schools, Healthy Students work, researchers from Ohio University's George V. Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs (OU-GVS) interviewed educational leaders in Ohio about their use of PBIS.***

***Here is information taken directly from that:***

***"[PBIS is] helping us notice the strengths of all of the kids" Ohio Educational leader; study on public value of PBIS.***

***How does PBIS offer educational leaders the opportunity to create public value?***

***According to the OU-GVS study on PBIS in Ohio, educational leaders said they value having PBIS in their schools, citing improved behavioral outcomes and more positive school climates. For example, they noted decreased office referrals, fewer absences, and higher overall morale. They also acknowledged the value of***

***having a tiered response to manage and respond to issues. Finally, leaders said they appreciate that the PBIS process is adaptable to accommodate different behavioral issues that arise.***

Senate Bill 246 raises the bar for school districts to employ PBIS and OCALI stands ready to support teachers, students, school districts and the leadership of ODE in their work to achieve this critical framework. We appreciate ODE's leadership in initiating the Ohio PBIS Network, which has resulted in 108 schools receiving recognition for their work implementing PBIS. We would also like to acknowledge and thank Senator Lehner for bringing this bill forward and taking this initiative to the next level.

Chairmen Oelslager and committee members, thank you again for allowing me to testify. I am happy to answer any questions, as well as provide you with more information about OCALI's extensive resources and services.