

# Statehouse News

*From the Office of Representative Allison Russo*



## A Note from Representative Russo

With the holidays right around the corner, I'm enjoying all the beautiful decorations and good cheer December brings. I hope you're spending quality time with your loved ones, just as I'm spending time with mine. As we approach the New Year, I'm committed to making sure we continue to invest in and strengthen Ohio's families. That's why I've devoted my attention to creating a safe and healthy environment that puts our loved ones first, while investing in policies that will improve our physical and mental well-being.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have concerns or thoughts on issues facing us here at home. Wishing you and your family a happy holiday season!

## Look Back: November 2019

November was busy here at the Statehouse! Rep. Russo kicked off November with the UAHS' Students4Change, the First Community Church, UA Education Foundation, and Parkland shooting survivor, Samantha Fuentes, spending a powerful afternoon discussing gun violence and actions students and communities can take to address this public health issue.



Rep. Russo later watched the Ohio House of Representatives unanimously pass HB 287, the bipartisan bill she introduced with Rep. Rick Perales (R-Beavercreek) to allow active duty members' children and spouses with special needs to

retain eligibility for Medicaid home and community-based services while stationed in Ohio. Given Rep. Russo's history as a military spouse and her understanding of the unique sacrifices of our military families, this bill is especially meaningful to her. She later celebrated the 2019 Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame Inductees, including HD24 veteran and community advocate Richard Isbell.



Rep. Russo was also a guest on Face the State, where she was able to discuss a number of important issues, including Ohio's rising number of uninsured children, Governor Mike DeWine's gun bill (SB 221), and finding common ground. Finally, she hosted a Children's Caucus panel, where experts discussed lead abatement and how this affects healthy and nourishing environments for children.



## Commendations and Condolences from Rep. Allison Russo

Congratulations to **Richard Isbell** on being inducted into the 2019 Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame! We thank him for his service to our community.

Congratulations to **Henry Wu** on being selected as a 2019 Rhodes Scholar! We are so proud of his hard work and achievement.

Congratulations to **Wellington High School Boys' Soccer Team** on winning the 2019 State Championship! Go Jaguars!

Congratulations to **Jim McCormac** on receiving the 2019 ODNR Cardinal Award and his induction into the ODNR Hall of Fame! We thank him for his dedication to our community.

---

## Issue Spotlight: Mental Health Parity

### Ohio insurers may not be covering mental health & addiction treatment to the levels required by federal law.

Mental health “parity” means that insurance plans covering mental health and substance use disorder services must make these services as equally accessible and no more cost prohibitive than medical and surgical services of a comparable scope. To codify this concept, the United States Congress passed the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) in 2008. Under the MHPAEA, parity requirements are established for insurance plans that choose to cover mental health and substance use disorder services.

Despite the federal parity law passed more than a decade ago, most people still have little awareness of their insurance coverage rights for mental health and substance use disorder treatment. A new report released by Millman shows that private insurance reimbursement rates to mental health providers in Ohio appear to be going down, and Ohio patients in need of behavioral health services are up to five times more likely to go out of network for treatment than patients in need of medical or surgical care. Such findings may point to underlying issues of non-compliance with the MHPAEA. To further complicate matters, Ohio passed its own parity laws in 2006, which have a narrower scope than the MHPAEA. Since the passage of the federal MHPAEA, Ohio has not updated its Revised Code, which creates confusion for parity implementation and enforcement.

H.B. 443 or the “Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act” is a bill Rep. Russo introduced with Rep. Plummer (R-Dayton) to address this problem. If this bill passes, it would align Ohio parity law with federal law; educate and train individuals to understand their rights and responsibilities; and coordinate state agencies in the implementation and enforcement of parity rights. Mental health parity has been identified as a top priority by Governor DeWine’s RecoveryOhio Advisory Council.

### Upcoming Events:

- COTA—Microtransit in Central Ohio Event  
December 4th, 12– 2pm; COTA Offices on N. High St.
- UA Council Reception for Sue Ralph  
December 9th, 6:30– 7:30pm; UA Municipal Services Bldg
- Computer Science Day  
December 10th, 10:30– 1:30pm; Statehouse Atrium
- Grand Opening and Tour—Amazon Think Big Space  
December 12th, 8am– 1:30pm; Innovation Hub, Hilliard
- Firefighters for Kids Toy Drive-Thru Drop-Off  
December 14th, 9am– 4pm; UA Fire Station 72
- Farewell Reception for Mayor Don Schonhardt  
December 17th, 4– 6pm; Hilliard Safety Service Bldg

### “Statehouse at Home”

*Come and meet with Rep. Russo to discuss the issues facing our community. Any and all constituents are welcome to attend.*

### Office Hours

- December 12, 4:30–6pm; Upper Arlington Library, Meeting Room A
- January 30, 4:30–6pm; Hilliard Library, Meeting Room 2A
- February 26, 4:30–6pm; Whetstone Library Meeting Room

### Legislative Agenda:

- Introduced HB 243, “Madeline’s Law’ Requiring Insurance Coverage of Child Hearing Aids” with Rep. Casey Weinstein (D-Hudson)
- Introduced HB 316, “Extreme Risk Protection Orders” with Rep. Bride Rose Sweeney (D-Cleveland)
- Introduced HB 407, “Clinical Integrity and Medical Accuracy Act” with Rep. Beth Liston (D-Dublin)
- Introduced HB 443, “Mental Health Parity Act” with Rep. Phil Plummer (R-Dayton)
- Introducing the “Child Support Modernization Act” with Rep. Susan Manchester (R-Waynesfield)
- Introducing the “Caregiver Expenses Tax Credit” with Rep. Janine Boyd (D-Cleveland Heights)
- Introducing the “Clean Drinking Water Act” with Rep. Mary Lightbody (D-Westerville)
- Co-sponsoring HB 317 “Universal Background Checks for Firearms” with Reps. Phil Robinson (D-Solon) and Adam Miller (D-Columbus)
- Co-sponsoring HB 305 “Fair School Funding Act” with Reps. John Patterson (D-Jefferson) and Robert Cupp (R-Lima)
- Cosponsoring HB 390 “Protect Pre-Existing Conditions Health Coverage Act” with Reps. Randi Clites (D-Ravenna) and Jeffrey Crossman (D-Parma)

Contact the office of Rep. Allison Russo at (614) 466-8012 or at [rep24@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:rep24@ohiohouse.gov)  
Stay up-to-date at [facebook.com/Russo4Ohio](https://facebook.com/Russo4Ohio) and [Twitter.com/Russo4Ohio](https://twitter.com/Russo4Ohio)