



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17, 2025

Hamilton County GOP Statement on the Centerstone MOA

At the August school board meeting, six Republican members of the Hamilton County School Board voted courageously to end the Memorandum of Agreement with Centerstone Mental Health. Their decision affirmed a core conservative principle: parents, not outside organizations, must remain at the center of their children's upbringing and well-being.

We acknowledge that some principals, teachers, and families have expressed concern that ending this agreement will leave students without needed support. We do not dismiss these concerns—student well-being matters deeply. But the reality is that Hamilton County Schools has already invested \$22 million per year to hire more than 250 student support coaches, counselors, and social workers. They also receive just under \$1 million annually in federal Title I and Title IV funds for ten additional student support service positions. That's over \$23 million dollars every year dedicated to mental health services within our schools.

The conservative position is firm: Hamilton County is not abandoning student mental health—it is already investing at record levels to support our students. What we reject is the outsourcing of our children's care to outside groups that are not accountable to parents or taxpayers.

Centerstone has been in Hamilton County schools for nearly ten years. A decade is long enough to evaluate results, and the outcomes do not justify continuing. In fact, Centerstone was never required to go through a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) process when it first entered our schools – meaning no competitive bids, no full transparency, and no guarantee that it was the best option for families.

Centerstone's own agreement states it will only inform parents "as necessary." That is unacceptable. Parents must always be fully informed about any counseling or mental health interventions involving their children.

Even more concerning, Centerstone and similar organizations promote ideological content that extends beyond basic mental health. Matters of identity, sexuality, and gender should be guided by parents and families – not introduced in school by outside providers. Public schools exist to teach academics and support student success, not advance social agendas.

No government program or activist-driven model can ever replace the authority of parents or the strength of families in guiding a child's emotional, moral, and spiritual development.

Since the vote, progressive activist groups—including the TEA, Public School Strong, CALEB Chattanooga, and Moms for Social Justice—have mobilized to pressure and even intimidate our school board members. These groups are pursuing a political agenda that does not reflect the values of everyday Hamilton County families.

We thank our Republican school board members for standing strong in the face of this pressure campaign. We urge all Hamilton County Republicans to:

1. Show up to the School Board meeting on Thursday, September 18 (Claude Ramsey Pkwy). Arrive early, wear red, and respectfully stand in support of those who voted to end the Centerstone MOA.
2. Email the Republican school board members to thank them for defending parents and protecting local control: hcdeboardmembers@hcde.org
3. Pray for courage, wisdom, and steadfastness for our school board members as they lead.

Parents – not activists, not bureaucrats – must remain in charge of their children's mental health and education.

— Hamilton County Republican Party