

# 1,700 Ohio Students March in We Are The Majority Rally

*Youth take back April 20, advocate for health and wellness*



COLUMBUS — More than 1,700 youth from middle and high schools across Ohio marched on the Ohio Statehouse today as part of a rally celebrating healthy lifestyles and in an effort to take back a day associated with marijuana use.

The event was led by the Youth Council of the Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network, which is a network of the Drug Free Action Alliance, with financial support from the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

“Today, we brought together youth from all parts of Ohio and all walks of life to share one vision with one voice,” said Harim C. Ellis, Director of Youth-Led Programs at DFAA. “They told the world that the vast majority of youth are *not* drinking underage, smoking tobacco or using drugs but are leading others to make healthy decisions every day.”

Ellis said delivering that message at the Ohio Statehouse was the youths’ way of saying, “Look at me – I’m doing the right thing, and I need your support.”

"Youth-led programs are unique because they embrace young people as resources who are capable of contributing to their communities instead of as a collection of problems that need to be 'fixed' -- especially when it comes to addressing substance abuse and mental health," said Valerie Leach, Adolescent Prevention Administrator for OMHAS. "Because youth empowerment is central to youth-led programs in Ohio, we believe that Ohio's young people must be involved in larger community conversations as they work to create meaningful change within their local schools and communities."

“I look forward to this incredible event every year,” said Tracy Plouck, Director of OMHAS. "It's so inspiring to see thousands of young Ohio leaders who are focused on wellness and healthy choices."

The rally was hosted on April 20, a day that is infamous in pop culture for its associations with the use of marijuana. The 1,700 youth took to social media using #weedrather and #WATMtakes420 to explain why they don't use marijuana.

"Every year at Drug Free Action Alliance, I look forward to this event," said Marcie Seidel, Executive Director at DFAA. "It brings home the importance of everything that we do – making healthy communities, preventing substance abuse, and promoting mental health wellness – all to protect and support our children."

Drug Free Action Alliance is a certified prevention agency leading the way in promoting healthy lives through the prevention of substance abuse and fostering mental health wellness for 30 years. DFAA is nationally recognized for building networks that empower communities to create safe and healthy environments. For more information, visit [www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org](http://www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org).

Ohio Youth-Led Prevention Network is a joint venture between Drug Free Action Alliance and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. OYLPN builds and expands partnerships between youth-led substance abuse prevention programs to develop and strengthen prevention efforts at the state and local levels.