



Senate Bill 30: Proponent Testimony
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Franklin County
Ohio House of Representatives: Committee on Community and Family Advancement
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Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chair Conditt, Ranking Member Boyce, and members of the Community and Family Advancement Committee: Thank you for providing me the opportunity to present proponent testimony on Senate Bill 30, legislation proposed in order to create the Ohio Family Stability Commission.

I serve as the Executive Director of the Human Service Chamber of Franklin County, a membership organization in its sixth year of existence. We provide a unified voice for our 57 member organizations, who serve the most vulnerable of Ohio's populations. Our organization provides members with shared services, pooled resources, and facilitation of collaborations that address complex, systemic needs in the human service sector. HSCFC members provide services to Franklin County residents whose ages vary from infants to seniors, and whose needs vary across health care, education, housing, employment, rehabilitation, and beyond. We aim for a future in which all Ohioans have access to a sustainable living wage as well as to affordable housing, childcare, education, health care services and a fair judicial system. We seek to move our clients from situations of crisis to that of stabilization and ultimately to thriving.

One of the unique insights of our vantage point as a coalition of human service organizations providing direct service to populations of need across Central Ohio comes from HSCFC's ability sees beyond issue silos. Families that are clients of one of our organizations may often also require services from another; for example, a family might seek access to behavioral health care from one of our members and job training from another. This allows us to see how systemic and pervasive poverty is in our communities. This unique vantage point also allows us to identify areas in which policy work stand to have the broadest positive impact. One of these areas is family stability.

Last year, the number one challenge listed by youth utilizing Basic Center services from the Family & Youth Services Bureau, which meet the immediate needs of runaway and homeless youth, was family dynamics.¹ Intact families invest greater cognitive stimulation and emotional support into their children than do single parents or broken and/or blended families, which results in higher achievement for children.² According to the U.S. Census, children in married households are the least likely to live in poverty.³ These statistics are not meant as a condemnation of single parent family structures, but we must recognize that health and achievement outcomes are systemically uneven between traditional and alternative families and create public policy with this in mind. The creation of the Ohio Family Stability Commission would examine and recommend policy across the human and social service sector that takes these realities into account.

¹ "Basic Center Youth Program Profile." *Family & Youth Services Bureau*, 2016.
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/bcp_youth_profile_20160119.pdf

² "The Economics of Inequality: The Value of Early Childhood Education." *American Educator*, 2011.
http://www.actionforchildren.org/up_doc/heckman.pdf

³ Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013. *United States Census Bureau*, 2014.
<http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/demo/p60-249.pdf>

HSCFC supports the creation of the Ohio Family Stability Commission, and S.B. 30 ensures that such a body would examine and make recommendations on the topic of family stability in an impactful manner that will bring a number of key policy areas into conversation with one another in effort to combat poverty and improve the lives of Ohioans. Our members are supportive of S.B. 30 and are confident that the cost savings realized from implementation of the Commission's recommendations that will be seen in safety net service spending – state and non-profit sectors alike – can result in a reinvestment of dollars in our state. Reduced state spending on juvenile incarceration and rehabilitation, Medicaid spending due to adverse health outcomes, and other assistance mechanisms means that there are more dollars available to grow our communities and our economy.

We appreciate the breadth and depth of knowledge represented in the language designating Commission appointees, and offer three more areas of expertise for inclusion: housing, behavioral health, and New Americans. Our membership believes that a stable family cannot exist without stable housing. Additionally, there is a behavioral and mental health crisis in our state that cannot be ignored when considering policy around family and community resources. Finally, it is critical that we take into account the unique challenges faced by our growing number of immigrant and refugee families as they seek to become part of Ohio's communities.

Thank you to Senator Tavares for sponsoring this important legislation and inviting HSCFC to testify. Thank you, Chairman Ginter and members of the Committee for allowing us this opportunity. I am happy to answer any questions, or follow up individually when useful, as I understand the time constraints of the lame duck committee and session schedule.