

Ohio House of Representatives



TO: House Members
FROM: Rep. Ron Young
DATE: October 10, 2017
RE: Sponsor Testimony – Public Assistance Data Efficiency Initiative

Chairman Ginter, Ranking Member Boyd, members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 340.

For over 20 years Ohio's public assistance computer systems including programs such as Medicaid, Children Protective Services, Child Support, The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and others have kept their data in separate silos and databases. To one degree or another over time, they have progressively insulated and walled off the information from each other. This practice has led to significant inefficiencies, loss of tax payer dollars, frustration for government employees, their supervisors and the clients which they serve.

For example, at this moment a Lake County JFS employee may be taking an application for food stamps from one of my constituents. After spending probably at least 30 minutes or more providing the required information the client might rise and walk the required 5 feet across a hallway to file for the Medicaid Program. To the astonishment of the client and the embarrassment of the employee, another perhaps often identical application must be completed. Requiring clients to provide addresses, phone numbers, SS numbers, work history, benefit program history, medical information, family background etc., multiple times at the same location and at the same time is absurd!

Making this scenario even more ridiculous is the fact that the employee taking the second application is usually sitting in front of a computer that now contains the very information the applicant has just provided to the other employee sitting just 5 feet away.

Access to the most of the necessary information is not available to the employees due to current administrative procedural guidelines. These current procedures are not only inflexible, inefficient and much more expensive than necessary but actually endangers the health of many of its clients.

When trying to place children in foster homes authorities cannot in far too many cases gain access to life-saving medical information about the child. Due to the restrictive nature of the procedures currently in place a diabetic child can, be placed in a foster home that has no access to the child's



medical records. Even when the child's medical information is already in the computer, if it has not entered directly into the Children's Service's Data Base the Children's Services personnel will not have access. This is just one of many dangerous and even life threatening scenarios the current systems allows to persist. Also, the proper sharing of the information will provide an important tool in identifying fraud and abuse. The list of problems created by the overly restrictive procedures are too numerous to describe during sponsor testimony.

According to the LSC none information sharing allowed under the provisions of HB340 is a violation of federal or state law. In addition each employee who would be using this shared information will be required to sign a disclosure form stating his or her understanding of what is permitted to be shared.

During the course of our research and discussions, we talked at length to the Business Technology Director for Colorado's Office of Administrative Services. Colorado has developed a sophisticated joint interoperability plan. It has been made perfectly clear by their implementation that there were no roadblocks from the federal government that were not able to be worked through. I believe that that same sharing can happen in the state of Ohio as well.

My local county commissioner brought issue to me and the bill draft has the support of the Ohio Job and Family Services Director's Association, the Ohio CSEA Director's Association, and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio. There have been several IP meetings over the summer and this bill and has been drafted in full consultation with the Ohio County Commissioner's Association of Ohio.