



House Community and Family Advancement Committee

Written Proponent Testimony, HB283

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Chairman Ginter, Ranking Member Boyd, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on HB340 on behalf of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership driven association of Ohio's county public children services agencies that advocates for and promotes child protection program excellence and sound public policy for safe children, stable families and supportive communities.

We appreciate Rep. Young's interest and leadership in the area of data-sharing among public human service programs. The major systems ---children services, child support, food assistance, cash benefits, child care, and Medicaid---share similar concerns and challenges. Program and client information is maintained in separate automated systems, driven by the specific program. Even though the same client may participate in more than one program, his or her information too often is restricted unnecessarily and is inaccessible to other programs. This creates inefficiencies for clients and workers and can prevent clients from receiving services they need. Unfortunately, this trend has worsened over the years, with more workers losing access to view information in other systems. This is true in combined agencies (county Job and Family Services) as well as stand-alone agencies (county Children Services Boards).

Specific to children services, the impact can be serious. For example, when a public children services agency (PCSA) removes a child from his or her home, the PCSA rarely has comprehensive information on the child's history and medical records. If a child cannot remain safely in the home, s/he is traumatized by the abuse or neglect as well as by the removal itself. Without knowing the child's history and current medical needs such as medication, the PCSA cannot fully care for this child during this period of additional trauma. Consider, for example, a diabetic child who is dependent on insulin and is removed from the home because of imminent danger. The PCSA has no way of knowing the child requires insulin if the parent does not share that information, putting the child at medical risk. Having read-only access to Medicaid's Information Technology System (MITS) could help the PCSA learn this information if the child was insured through Medicaid. Medicaid has agreed to allow PCSA

read-only access but that has not moved forward, leaving caseworkers unable to obtain this critical information and children at risk.

Information from other systems such as CRIS-E and Ohio Benefits can improve children services' ability to protect abuse and neglected children. For example, information in these systems can help caseworkers learn who else lives in the home, find absent parents and current addresses, and help determine if a child in custody qualifies for federal IV-E payments based on family income. While much of this information can be viewed as administrative in nature, it also impacts worker safety. For example, knowing if other adults live in the home can better prepare a caseworker for a home visit to investigate allegations of abuse or neglect, an inherently adversarial interaction with the potential to escalate.

PCSAO supports better data sharing among and between public assistance and human services programs. We look forward to working with Rep. Young and this Committee to break down barriers and ensure that public agencies can carry out their duties more efficiently, and in the case of children services, safely carry out our role of protecting abused and neglected children with less bureaucracy.

Respectfully submitted by,



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