



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

House Community and Family Advancement Committee

Interested Party Testimony on HB533

May 16, 2018

Mary Wachtel, Director of Public Policy

Public Children Services Association of Ohio

37 W. Broad Street, Suite 1100

Columbus, OH 43215

mary@pcsao.org

614.224.5802

The Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO) appreciates the opportunity to provide interested party testimony for HB533. 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. Pelanda's focus on the critical issue of recruiting and retaining foster caregivers and for convening interested parties to gather input on this bill. Children do best in a family. When children cannot stay in their own homes, they need trained, committed foster caregivers available to meet their needs and partner with children services agencies.

Ohio's required number of hours for both pre-licensure and ongoing training is one of the highest in the country. We agree that it is time for an assessment of Ohio's foster caregiver training system. That is partly why we advocated for the establishment of the Foster Care Advisory Group in HB49. That group, convened by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, has recently concluded its work by producing a report and recommendations; we recommend reviewing those recommendations as you consider HB533.

In addition, the state child welfare training manager, the Institute for Human Services, has collected a useful body of research on this topic, and that research, along with information

from other states, helped inform the work of the Foster Care Advisory Group. You should also be aware that recent federal changes to child welfare contained in the Bipartisan Budget Act call for significant changes to the foster care system to be rolled out over the next two years. These changes, known as the Family First Prevention Services Act, will likely streamline foster care licensing, and any changes now should be made keeping the federal requirements in mind.

While there is no “magic number” for the number of hours of training foster caregivers should be required to complete, we agree that pre-service hours can be reduced and refocused. And, that ongoing training needs to be robust and focused on the specific needs of the children the foster caregivers are serving.

As you consider the specific proposals in HB533, we suggest keeping in mind the following key points from the research cited above:

- There is often significant time between completion of preservice training and placement of a child with the foster caregiver, leading to a “forgetting curve.” The goal of preservice should not be to impart all knowledge caregivers will need, but rather to provide them with the information they need to decide whether foster care is right for their family.
- Given the complexities of the children in care, there is a significant body of fundamental information caregivers need to have. This information will be more relevant and better retained if it is shared when the caregivers have, or soon will have, placement.
- Ongoing training should be based on the needs of the caregivers. The better we can identify the needs, the more relevant and effective we can make the training.

We look forward to working with Rep. Pelanda and this Committee to revise Ohio’s training requirements for foster caregivers so that every child in care receives the love, support and services they need. Thank you.