



Ohio Children's Alliance

Leading change for child and family service providers

House Criminal Justice Committee

May 18, 2020

Proponent Testimony on H.B. 558

Chairman Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on H.B. 558.

My name is Kate Rossman; I am the Policy Coordinator of the Ohio Children's Alliance. Founded in 1973 as Ohio's first statewide child advocacy organization, the Ohio Children's Alliance provides leadership for Ohio's at-risk children, families, and community agencies. Our membership is composed of over 80 agencies throughout Ohio that provide foster care and behavioral health services to over 100,000 children and family members each year.

The bill before you today, House Bill 558, aims to take care of our military families and children in Ohio by ensuring that child abuse is reported and investigated in accordance with Department of Defense requirements.

Currently the Department of Defense requires the Military Services to establish Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with state and local child welfare services to collaborate on child abuse and neglect cases involving military families. However, county welfare agencies may not have authority or guidance to collect or provide this information through the appropriate Department of Defense channels.

H.B. 558 would ensure county child welfare agencies have a process for collecting and sharing child abuse and neglect case information for military families with the Armed Forces branch to which they belong. It would also clarify in state law that the requirement that PSCAs disclose child abuse and neglect information to a government entity for the child's protection also applies to any appropriate military authority.

Child abuse and neglect in the U.S. and around the world is a serious and prevalent public health problem. An [estimated one in four children](#) have experienced abuse or neglect at some point in their lives. Everyone has a role to play in creating safe and healthy communities; this is particularly true when it comes to the health and safety of children. We want to ensure that the Armed Forces are empowered to be a part of creating those communities and we need to ensure that we are doing everything we can to make sure Ohio's military families are safe.

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Chairman Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Criminal Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 558. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

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