



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

House Health Committee
Proponent Testimony on HB8
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Good morning Chair Merrin, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the Committee. I am Mary Wachtel with 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.

PCSAO and our member agencies support HB8. We appreciate Rep. Manchester's and Rep. Galonski's focus on the critical issue of recruiting and retaining foster caregivers and for their leadership in bringing this bill forward. 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 and with birth parents.

Knowing that it was time for an assessment of Ohio's foster caregiver training system, PCSAO advocated for the establishment of a Foster Care Advisory Group in HB49. That group, convened by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, concluded its work in Spring 2018 by producing a report which I believe was shared with you as part of sponsor testimony last week. That report's recommendations regarding foster caregiver training are reflected in HB8, the reason PCSAO supports the bill.

Broadly speaking, HB8 removes both the number of hours for pre-placement and continuing training and the prescribed training topics from ORC and gives the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services the authority to establish both via rule. In addition, the bill permits for up to 20% of the preplacement training hours to be completed on-line and directs that continuing training should be in accordance with the foster caregiver's needs assessment and continuing training plan. These changes will result in training being more accessible and better targeted to meeting foster caregivers' needs, based upon the foster children placed in their homes.

You should also be aware that recent federal changes to child welfare contained in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 call for significant changes to the foster care system to be rolled out by 2021. These changes, known as the Family First Prevention Services Act, include provisions to streamline foster care licensing. Having the specifics of training requirements in OAC rather than in ORC will enable ODJFS to timely respond to any changes that Ohio may need to implement in order to come into compliance with these federal changes.

For all of these reasons, PCSAO and our member agencies support HB8. We appreciate the General Assembly's commitment to support Ohio's foster caregivers so that every child in care receives the love, support and services they need. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.