



Ohio House Health Committee
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
House Bill 14 – Kinship Care
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Good morning, Chairman Merrin, Vice Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the committee. I am Kimberly Hall, director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, to discuss kinship care in House Bill 14.

In our Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget request, one of the four programs we prioritized concerned protecting and nurturing our children, and a new kinship navigator program was one of the many ways to advance that goal. While implementing a kinship navigator program won't end all of Ohio's kinship woes, it's a great start. I will spend the next few minutes outlining that program, and I welcome the opportunity later to respond to your questions.

We proposed \$3.5 million in GRF to launch a Kinship Navigator Program for Ohio's estimated 100,000 grandparents and other relatives who have honorably volunteered to care for children when their own parents cannot.

Kinship Navigator Programs provide referrals to programs and local services that range from Medicaid to local support groups. A handful of counties, including Richland and Muskingum, already offer kinship programming, and they have been very successful. Our goal is to extend this service to kinship caregivers statewide. We estimated that our budget request for this program would draw an additional \$3.5 million in federal funds for a total of \$7 million.

Signed into law last year, the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) allows for states to receive reimbursement beginning October 1st this year for the provision of services implemented by a federally approved title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program. Programs funded under the title IV-E Kinship Navigator Program must meet certain requirements described in the Social Security Act and must also meet practice criteria of promising, supported, or well-supported in accordance with the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse criteria and be approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Last year, Ohio received more than a half million dollars in federal funds, which must be used by October 1st this year to support the development and implementation of the kinship navigator program. Ohio has submitted a request for additional funding for Federal Fiscal Year 2019 to be

used in the continued development, implementation, and evaluation of this program to position the state for approval of its program for Title IV-E funding under the FFPSA. ODJFS has broadened the focus of its program plan to include an Adoption Navigator component along with the Kinship Navigator Program. While kinship caregivers and adoptive parents are distinct populations with individualized needs, there are common needs across both groups. Therefore, ODJFS has braided resources in both programmatic areas to support simultaneous development. The designed Kinship and Adoption Navigator program will target improved outcomes for children including reduced time in the children services system as well as preventing entry or re-entry into foster care. I urge your consideration of this two-pronged approach.

An internal project manager has been designated to oversee the development of the statewide program and to work with an external consultant, Kinnect, to facilitate its development. A stakeholder workgroup that includes other state and local agencies, kinship and adoption advocacy groups and most importantly adoptive parents, kinship caregivers, adult adoptees and youth raised by kinship caregivers has been identified. The workgroup will work to ensure the program will meet the needs of the families while also avoiding duplication or fragmentation of services. The internal project manager along with the external vendor will seek to implement the program in five phases: Assessment, Teaming, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation and Support. Using this framework will lead to a program that is effective, integrated, efficient and sustainable. The goal is to develop both a comprehensive implementation and evaluation plan for the program by October 1st.

When Ohio's children cannot remain in their homes, the next best thing is to be with kin. I support House Bill 14, and this agency stands ready to implement a navigator program to place children all across the state in a stable and loving home so they can thrive. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide an overview of how a navigator program might work, and I would be happy to answer any questions.