

Ohio House of Representatives  
Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee

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Testimony on HB 166

**Witness:** Jeffrey R. Greene, Ph.D., LPCC-S, FAPA  
Vice President of Residential, Foster Care, and Medical Services  
St. Vincent Family Center – Columbus, Ohio

Chairman Romanchuk, Ranking Member West and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on HB 166.

My name is Jeff Greene; I serve as Vice President of Residential, Foster Care, and Medical Services at St. Vincent Family Center, a pediatric behavioral health non-profit agency that provides a continuum of prevention, behavioral health, foster care, and residential treatment services to over 6000 children and families of Central Ohio. We were founded in 1875 by a small group of kindhearted nuns determined to create a special place dedicated to taking in and taking care of orphans and destitute children. Today, over 100 years later, we have evolved but remain committed to our mission to make good kids better.

I am very supportive of the proposed biennial budget. There are many child and family-focused initiatives that truly are investments in our state's future, including the proposed investments in home-visiting programs, child protection, drug use prevention, and student wellness. One particular area of investment that is not yet addressed in the proposed budget is preparing our state for implementation of the Family First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA), in particular, the new opportunities permitted by FFPSA that would allow Ohio to draw down millions of federal dollars to keep families intact and prevent avoidable placements into foster care.

Under FFPSA, the State of Ohio will be able to access federal Title IV-E reimbursement – at a 50% match rate – for qualified family preservation services. This represents a major opportunity for Ohio to shift the existing cost of these services to the federal government, and, at the same time, be able to afford to provide more preventative services to Ohio's vulnerable children and families. I'm sure that I don't have to tell you that the net result of your investment will have the net effect of greatly helping to prevent children from entering foster care and, in turn, freeing up even more money. If implemented successfully, FFPSA will save Ohio tax payers money and preserve Ohio's families.

*We Make Good Kids Better*

HB  
166

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*Our Mission:  
We make good kids better  
by providing pediatric  
behavioral health care within a  
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does not currently provide any funding to ready our system for FFPSA implementation. The type of qualified services that community providers, like my agency, could provide are proprietary evidence-based interventions that require training, technical assistance, and time to implement. Qualified behavioral health interventions, such as *Multi-Systemic Therapy* and *Nurse Family Partnership* are also quite expensive to purchase and implement. Currently, community agencies in Ohio do not provide many of these qualified evidence-based interventions, and of those who do, only provide them to a specific population of clients who would not be covered by FFPSA. Therefore, in order to maximize this new federal reimbursement opportunity, Ohio has to develop programs and services that qualify – and quickly. The law will be implemented in Ohio not later than October 1, 2021.

I most strongly encourage this committee to consider appropriating funds to ODJFS to prepare public and private community agencies for FFPSA implementation. Ideally, ODJFS could create, or contract for, a technical assistance center that would equip community agencies with the training, technical assistance, and license fees to implement FFPSA qualified services. The Ohio Children’s Alliance called for a \$9 million investment to ODJFS over the biennium for this purpose. That level of funding is critical for the Legislature to designate for FFPSA readiness. If our state is not ready to maximize the FFPSA law before October 1, 2021, we will not only miss an opportunity to preserve Ohio’s families and prevent children from entering foster care, but we will also miss out on a chance to reduce child welfare expenditures.

Thank you for your time today.

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A large, stylized graphic of a person is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page. The figure is composed of simple, rounded shapes: a light green circle for the head, a white curved line for the torso, and a thick green curved line for the legs. The background behind the figure is a gradient of green, transitioning from light to dark.