



Ohio Children's Alliance

Leading change for child and family service providers

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee

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Testimony on HB 166

Witness: Mark Mecum, CEO, Ohio Children's Alliance

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

My name is Mark Mecum; I am the CEO 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 providers. Our membership is composed of over seventy community agencies throughout the State of Ohio that provide foster care and behavioral health services to over 100,000 children and family members each year.

With us today is a panel of CEOs and senior leaders of community organizations based in greater Toledo, Youngstown, Columbus, and Cincinnati. The nonprofit organizations they represent are recipients – directly and indirectly – of state budget funding and are governed by state laws and regulations. These community organizations, and our greater Alliance, are change-makers in our communities. They are:

- Combatting the opioid crisis with prevention and treatment services;
- Keeping families together by addressing challenges with parental drug use, mental health needs of family members, and the overall socio-economic situation of the family;
- Preventing sex trafficking through education to youth and supporting victims with safe housing and treatment;
- Caring for most of Ohio's foster children through their networks of foster homes, group homes, and residential treatment centers; and
- Coordinating services to multi-system youth and their families, through Wraparound programs and coordination of health care and social services.

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Our member organizations are licensed and certified by multiple state agencies and are contracted providers with Medicaid managed care, county children services, juvenile courts, and the mental health and recovery boards – and more. They are at the center of our health care and social services delivery systems and are best positioned to provide care to vulnerable kids and families who are involved in public systems, including child welfare and behavioral health. Collectively, we offer unique and important view of the proposed state budget.

Overall, we are very supportive of the Governor’s proposed state budget, and the added provisions in the as-introduced version of HB 166. The proposed investments in children services and behavioral health are critical and will help our state advance the recommendations from the Legislature’s Multi-System Youth Committee.

Today, you will hear from our panel about why many of the investments are important, and you will also hear about what else the Legislature should consider investing in, including the State of Ohio’s implementation of the new major federal child welfare reform law, the Family First Prevention Services Act, which is not yet addressed in the proposed state budget.

Thanks again for your time today. Our panelists look forward to diving in to the health and human services topic areas with you. At the conclusion of our testimony, we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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