



Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association

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Joel Potts, Executive Director

Ohio House Community and Family Advancement Committee

Testimony on Senate Bill 70

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Chairman Ginter, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as a proponent on Senate Bill 70.

My name is Joel Potts and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association. We represent Ohio's eighty-eight county departments of job and family services, of which sixty-seven agencies also serve as the local child support enforcement agency.

Ohio's child support program is a national model, collecting \$8.25 for every dollar invested: thirty-three percent above the national average. Investments in this program are extremely cost effective, lift children out of poverty, reduce dependency on public assistance programs, and support families. Families receiving public assistance benefits will leave the program almost twice as fast as cases where no child support order is established or collections are made. There are over one-million children in Ohio needing support, and local child support enforcement agencies successfully collect nearly \$2 billion a year for these families.

Despite our best efforts, the program is often bureaucratic, complex, costly and time consuming for all parties involved. Many of these challenges may be addressed through administrative processes rather than through the courts. A statewide Shareholders' Reform Group was formed to make recommendations on ways to improve our program, including reviewing our administrative process. The group consisted of legislators, judges, magistrates, the state department of job and family services, county child support agency representatives, and parent groups. Many of the recommendations of the work group have been implemented where authority existed to do so, but others require statutory changes.

Senate Bill 70 includes the administrative process changes recommended by the Shareholder Reform Group. These changes are identical to those included in Senate Bill 308 from last year. SB 308 passed the full Senate and House Committee unanimously but failed to get to the House Floor for a final vote before the end of the 131st General Assembly.

This bill would go far to enhance Ohio's child support program. The bill's proposed changes would streamline the administrative process, reduce the number of cases requiring court hearings, speed up collections, and enable many disputes to be resolved quicker. This bill would also provide more consistency to the program, especially in cases involving multiple jurisdictions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you again for the opportunity to speak as a proponent of Senate Bill 70. I would be happy to answer any questions and look forward to working with you to finalize legislation which meets the needs of the citizens we serve.