



SENATOR CAPRI S. CAFARO

32nd Ohio Senate District

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Senator Capri S. Cafaro - Sponsor Testimony Senate Bill 234- Changes to SACWIS Senate Education Committee May 10th, 2016

Chairwoman Lehner, Vice-Chair Hite, Ranking Member Sawyer, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 234, to enact changes that allow principals or their designees to search the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System when new children enter their school.

This bill would prevent children services from losing track of kids when they are moved from one school district to another. The legislation states that whenever a new child enters a school district, the principal or their designee must check the child's name in SACWIS. SACWIS, the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, is already in place by JFS and PCSAO. This system is used by children services workers to document all child related investigations. The proposed legislation instructs the Department of Jobs and Family Services to create a very limited SACWIS profile for principals. The principal or the designee would enter any and all new students that have entered the school district, at any point during the year. The profile flags a child's name if there is currently an open children services investigation or if the children services case was closed due to loss of contact with the family. In the cases of a flagged SACWIS case, the principal would be required to call the local children services office and inform them that this student is now in the district. Children services would then continue to handle the case with their normal protocols.

Senate Bill 234 will help prevent children with open cases in JFS from slipping through the cracks when they change school districts and counties. While county children services currently does track children with open investigations as they move across county lines, sometimes they do not know when they are moved. This situation occurred a few years ago with Teddy Foltz. Teddy was moved from one county to another by his mother, which resulted in his case falling through the cracks. Due to the lack of contact with the family, children services could not track Teddy in time, and he ultimately died as a result of prolonged abuse. I want

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to ensure this tragic event does not happen again.

This bill would be very limited in cost. No extra personnel would be needed for the login and the cost to create the new limited profile would be minimal. The Department of Jobs and Family Services has assured us that this profile could be easily created and that the only information the principal would be able to see is the child's name and if there is a flagged investigation.

The legislation is a result of input from the following interested parties:

- Teddy's Family
- The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services
- The Ohio Department of Education
- The Attorney General's Office
- Public Children's Services Association of Ohio
- Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators
- Ohio Education Association
- Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators
- Buckeye Association of School Administrators
- Ohio Association of Independent Schools
- Catholic Conference of Ohio
- Agudath Israel of America
- The Home School Legal Defense Association

I believe that if this bill helps even one child, it would be a success. We should ensure that our children continue to be a priority. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Teddy's Story - Teddy's Law

Teddy's Story

Theodore "Teddy" A. Foltz-Tedesco was born January 15, 1999 and died January 26, 2013. Teddy was taken to Akron Children's Hospital Mahoning Valley in Boardman by his mother, however his injuries were so severe he was immediately transferred to St. Elizabeth's Health Center in Youngstown. After 3 years of keeping Teddy from his family, his mother continued to block access to even his father while he was critically ill in the hospital.

After repeated reports from neighbors to area Children's Services authorities there was still no help for Teddy. When teachers noticed signs of abuse and reported it to authorities the mother pulled all 3 of her children out of the public school system and began home schooling them.

Abuse and torture of the three boys had been going on for as long as 3 years. Evidence from Teddy's examination and autopsy revealed severe frostbite from being made forced to shovel snow in bare feet, being repeatedly punched, having his head slammed against a wall, being made to walk on hot coals, and hit with pool sticks and bars of soap.

The official cause of death was listed as severe head trauma.

How did this happen?

This ongoing abuse and torture was enabled by a family being isolated from everyone and every source of help. Isolation is one of the highest indicators abuse is going on, however many are unaware of that. It happened because the laws in place to protect are children leave far too many loopholes and leave the ones that need protecting the most directly in harm's path.

We encourage you to [learn more about preventing child abuse](#) and ask you to help us fight for Teddy's law.

Recent Posts

Family says boy hidden from them - TribToday.com - News, Sports, Jobs, Community Information - Tribune Chronicle

January 31, 2013

STRUTHERS - Family members said they had no idea 14-year-old Teddy Foltz was being abused by his mother's boyfriend because his mother refused access to the boy.

Shawn Tedesco, the boy's father, and other family members, including sisters of the mother, said the behavior began when Zaryl Bush, 43, began seeing Shain Widdersheim three years ago.

Wednesday, Bush was arraigned in municipal court for the rape and murder of the boy and his bond was set at \$1 million. Widdersheim was arrested on charges of complicity and obstruction charges after investigators said she refused to cooperate.

Foltz died early Monday morning after first being taken to the hospital Jan. 21 by Widdersheim. A family member asked police to investigate Jan. 23 because of the suspicious nature of his injuries.

After court Wednesday, Tedesco said he wanted to speak to reporters because he refused to be silent any more. He said Widdersheim had custody of the boy but refused to let him see his son. The last time he saw his son before he died was on his 10th birthday, Tedesco said.

"I never suspected," Tedesco said. "She blocked everybody."

Tedesco said before charges were filed against Widdersheim that she deserved to be charged also because she did not stop what happened to his son.

"The job of the woman is to protect the kids and she didn't do that," Tedesco said.

Paul Foltz, Teddy's grandfather, said they had no idea what was going on.

"Nobody knew a thing," Paul Foltz said.

One of Widdersheim's sisters also said they were not able to visit or talk to her either while she lived with Bush.

Sara Foltz, Teddy's grandmother, tried to speak but was too choked up to do so.

In court, Bush told Visiting Judge Jamie Dunn that he was unemployed and his \$182 monthly unemployment benefits had recently expired, so he has no income. Dunn ordered a lawyer be appointed

to represent Bush.

Bush showed no emotion except when he was asked if he understood what a preliminary hearing was. He chuckled and said no and Lou DeFabio, who was representing Bush solely for his arraignment, explained it to him. Several workers and others in the Municipal Building, where the court is housed, expressed anger and shock, especially anger towards Bush.

Tedesco said the last time he saw his son was his 10th birthday party until just before he died, in the hospital. He said when he found out his son was in the hospital he was not allowed to see him for awhile because Widdersheim told hospital staff she forbade it.

"The last time I saw him he was on life support," Tedesco said. "Nobody should have to see anything like that. It shouldn't have happened."