

State Senator William P. Coley II

Senate Bill 291 Sponsor Testimony

Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee

May 22nd, 2018

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about Senate Bill 291.

This legislation is inspired by the work of a unique charitable organization known as Safe Families for Children that is already serving families right here in Ohio. The Safe Families program allows a parent in a crisis situation to temporarily request that their children be hosted by a fully screened and vetted “host family” for a specific, limited period of time. The host family provides a temporary place for children to stay and give parents peace of mind so they can focus on getting back on their feet. The goal of the program is to strengthen and preserve biological families in a natural, community-focused way that is free from the stress and red-tape of government.

This legislation defines a qualified organization, creates standards for background checks of host families, and permits placements in the following situations involving one or both parents:

-incarceration

-incapacitation

-medical, psychiatric, or psychological treatment

-military service

-other appropriate circumstances

In addition, Senate Bill 291 clarifies that a child placed in a home pursuant to this program shall not be deemed abandoned. I’d like to thank the Ohio Judicial Conference and the Public Children Services Association of Ohio for their assistance in ensuring this legislation, while providing flexibility for parents, maintains robust protections for those kids involved. These measures will provide the parents utilizing these programs with peace of mind while they take responsible steps to support their families.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I would like to thank you for your time and consideration and would be happy to answer any questions.