



State Representative Cindy Abrams
Sponsor Testimony - House Bill 558
House Criminal Justice Committee
May 13, 2020

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and fellow members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 558.

A top priority for the Department of Defense, this key legislation aims to take care of our military families in Ohio. If enacted, this bill would require public children services agencies to report child abuse or neglect in military families to the appropriate military authorities.

Current Department of Defense Policy requires the Military Services to establish Memoranda of Understanding, known as MOUs, with state and local child welfare services to collaborate on the oversight of cases involving military families. However, county welfare agencies may not have authority or direction to collect this information or share it with the appropriate Department of Defense Authorities.

This legislation would support development of more consistent MOUs, allowing better coordination of local child welfare and military protective and rehabilitative services by implementing two new policies:

1. Requiring child welfare case workers to ask clients if they are associated with the military
2. Providing case workers the authority to share this information with the appropriate military authorities

The Department of Defense depends on working in collaboration with state and local governments to fulfill its statutory obligation to address child abuse and neglect. Please consider supporting this legislation enabling them to do just that.

Chairman Lang and members of this committee, thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony and at this time, I would be happy to answer any questions.