



Ohio Children's Alliance

Leading change for child and family service providers

Senate Judiciary Committee

May 27, 2020

Proponent Testimony on S.B. 308

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Sub S.B. 308.

My name is Kate Rossman and I am the Policy Coordinator for 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 agencies. Our membership is composed of over 80 agencies throughout Ohio that provide foster care, behavioral health services, and residential services to over 100,000 children and family members each year.

The bill before you today, Sub. Senate Bill 308, would provide qualified civil liability to businesses, healthcare providers, congregate care facilities, and their employees during and after the COVID-19 government-declared disaster.

Our members, like many other service providers and health care workers, provide essential services that were not suspended during COVID-19. Our behavioral health providers, foster care agencies, and children's residential facilities continue to serve children who have come into contact with or have tested positive for the virus, protecting and caring for them and their families despite the difficulties they face in doing so.

COVID-19 has provided an unprecedented challenge to our member organizations, as spreads at twice the rate of the flu, produces serious, life-threatening symptoms, and can be transferred through asymptomatic carriers. These challenges have been compounded by PPE and test kit shortages as well as difficulties retaining staff because of COVID-19-related factors, such as quarantine requirements and lack of available child care.

On top of this, with the science still being established, it is impossible to know if current best practices will allow our behavioral health and social services providers to protect themselves and those around them completely against COVID-19 or to guarantee that it will not spread, particularly in congregate care settings.

Our organization supports Sub. Senate Bill 308 because it would protect good-faith acts to provide care in light of these extraordinary circumstances. While the legislation opens qualified civil immunity protections to more providers and

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facilities, it remains committed to responsible patient protections by allowing civil suits for intentionally harmful or negligent conduct.

We appreciate Senator Huffman's efforts to be inclusive of all of the essential organizations in this state recognizing the unprecedented nature of this crisis.

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to testify on Sub. S.B. 308. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,

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