



Ohio Judicial Conference

The Voice of Ohio Judges

House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee

Paul Pfeifer

Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 4

April 15, 2021

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to submit interested party testimony for House Bill 4 on behalf of the Ohio Judicial Conference. I am Paul Pfeifer, Executive Director of the Judicial Conference.

The OJC supports H.B. 4's requirement to have Children Services notify law enforcement of all abuse reports when an arrest has not already been made. We have two suggestions for how the bill could be improved. First, we are concerned that notifying law enforcement of all neglect reports would have the unintended consequence of taking the focus off the most urgent cases. In the more populated counties, this would require notifying law enforcement of 1000s of cases annually. We believe Children Services should first determine which negligence cases are most in need of law enforcement intervention and convey those reports.

The OJC also supports codifying a requirement that Children Services memorandum of understanding be renewed and reviewed within a reasonable timeframe. It is our understanding that there is not currently an MOU review period codified in the law. We believe annual renewal and review of MOUs places an unnecessary administrative burden on the juvenile courts and other parties. We suggest modifying the bill to require biennial MOU renewal and review.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 4. We also thank the sponsors, Representative Manchester and Representative Plummer, for their work on this bill. We would be happy to offer our assistance on the bill if it would be helpful. Although I am unavailable to testify in-person, I can follow-up on any questions you may have.