

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: May 20, 2021

Name: Anthony Capizzi

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): Children Services Transformation Advisory Council

Position/Title: Montgomery County Juvenile Court Administrative Judge

Address: 380 West 2nd Street

City: Dayton State: Ohio Zip: 45422

Best Contact Telephone: 937-496-6600 Email: acapizzi@mcjcoho.org

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): Sub HB4

Specific Issue: Institute a statewide children services ombudsman

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

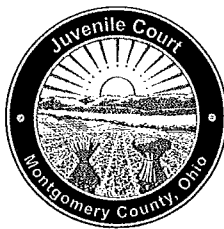
Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? N/A

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.



**Montgomery County Common Pleas Court
Juvenile Division**

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House Families, Aging, and Human Services Committee
Proponent testimony Sub HB4
May 20, 2021
Honorable Anthony "Tony" Capizzi
Administrative Judge
Montgomery County Juvenile Justice Center
acapizzi@mcjcoho.org
937-496-6600

Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and members of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to offer proponent testimony on Substitute House Bill 4 on behalf of the Children Services Transformation (CST) Advisory Council and as an Ohio Juvenile Court Judge.

I am Judge Anthony Capizzi, Administrative Judge at Montgomery County Juvenile Justice Court. Please accept my apology for not attending in person to present my position on this critical issue. I preside over a Juvenile Treatment Court each Thursday where I will see approximately 25 youth struggling with drugs and/or alcohol.

Governor Mike DeWine established, as you may be aware, the CST Advisory Council in November 2019 to improve outcomes for Ohio's children. The Advisory Council was a multi-disciplinary group of subject matter experts and individuals with lived experience in the foster care system, including foster youth and biological, kinship, foster, and adoptive families. The Advisory Council hosted 10 regional foster care forums throughout the state shortly after our formation, to better understand local challenges. The council heard from nearly 500 Ohioans on their experiences with Ohio's foster care system. The forums were followed by 14 Advisory Council meetings, held from January to October 2020, to review additional written testimony and develop recommendations. In November, 2021, we issued our final report with 37 recommendations for reforming Ohio's children services system.

One of the critical recommendations in response to all the testimony we heard is the creation of a state-level ombudsman to handle concerns for all youth and caregivers

connected to the children services and foster care system. The specific recommendation is to:

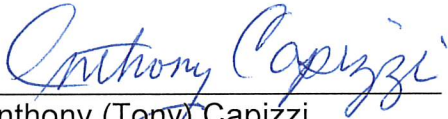
Institute a statewide children services ombudsman. Establish a state-level ombudsman to independently investigate and resolve complaints made by or on the behalf of children and families involved with children services. Ohio should have an independent outlet for individuals to voice their concerns with the foster care system.

Substitute House Bill 4 current language supports the Advisory Council's vision for a statewide children services ombudsman. The language incorporates the testimony the council heard regarding the need for a comprehensive office that manages complaints and investigations and serves as a separate, neutral office from the Office of Families and Children, public county children services agencies and private foster care agencies. As written in the sub house bill, this office will be able to serve all children involved in the system, not just those in custody or foster care. The advisory council supports a collaborative design approach in developing the office that includes involvement of foster youth, county agencies, private providers and parents and caregivers. This approach along with the leadership of the office will ensure foster youth are heard and prioritized impartially.

In addition, the sub house bill addresses the council's key priorities of the office including:

- **Authority:** The ombudsman will be appointed by the Governor, have access to necessary records while maintaining confidentiality, have defined roles and responsibilities and an established communication mechanism including a toll-free number.
- **Accountability:** The office is expected to identify system issues and advocate for change, provide an annual report to the Governor, Legislature and ODJFS, record and track data and trends, and commit to evaluation and adjustments to operations as needed over time.
- **Outreach:** The office will provide public outreach, education, training, and advocacy.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony, for Sub HB 4. I also thank the sponsors, Representative Manchester and Representative Plummer, for incorporating this imperative recommendation into the bill. Although I am unavailable to testify in-person, I can follow-up on any questions you may have.


Anthony (Tony) Capizzi
Administrative Judge
Montgomery County Juvenile Court