



November 15, 2021

The Buckeye Ranch Testimony on Testimony on HB 442

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today regarding House Bill 442.

My name is Ann Woodford; I am the VP of Child Welfare at The Buckeye Ranch. We are a non-profit that provides support to nearly 500 children and youth in foster care throughout Ohio.

This legislation would support the important work we do with Ohio's foster youth. As you well know workforce shortages already existed in the social service/behavioral health sector in Ohio and things have only become increasingly more challenging during the pandemic. This year The Buckeye Ranch had the opportunity to add three new adoption assessor positions through a privately funded donation to help us increase the number of foster/adoptive homes to meet the growing need for children to be in family settings. It took 8 months to get these positions filled because of the requirement for private agency to hire a bachelor degreed staff person with a license. In total we received five applicants who met these stringent standards. As a comparison during this same period when hiring for a position that required a bachelor's degree we received over one hundred applicants and onboarded within a month.

This legislation will ensure quality while allowing private agencies to keep with the growing demand for staff. Our partners at the Public Children Services agencies (PCSA) are already utilizing the same prerequisites that we are asking to be implement in the private agency sector. If this legislation is passed it will ensure that The Buckeye Ranch continues to find safe and stables homes for Ohio's children in need of our care.

Please consider supporting HB 442 to allow private agencies to have the same flexibilities as our PCSA partners who also support children and youth in foster care. By supporting HB 442 Ohio will align with Pennsylvania, Kentucky, West Virginia, Indiana and Michigan who already have parity between the public and private agencies in their state. The Buckeye Ranch supports expanding eligibility to perform the duties of a Home Assessor to include those outlined in HB 442.

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today regarding House Bill 442. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you,
Ann Woodford
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