



# SANDUSKY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF JOB & FAMILY SERVICES

2511 Countryside Drive • Suite A • Fremont, Ohio 43420 • [info@sanduskycountydjfs.org](mailto:info@sanduskycountydjfs.org)

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2/8/2022

Opponent Testimony SB 216  
Senate Judiciary Committee

Melanie Allen, Director of Sandusky County DJFS  
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Chair Manning, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Committee, this written testimony is on behalf of the Sandusky County DJFS, Children Services Division where I proudly serve as the Director. As a nearly 25-year veteran in this workforce, it is imperative to my staff to share our opposition to Senate Bill 216, *Enact Dylan's Law*.

This bill requires substance-exposed infants (except those whose mothers are in MAT) to enter into agency custody for at least six months, prohibits parent/child contact, and prohibits parent/infant residing together until certain conditions are met; and sets those conditions whereby a child is able to return home. Based on our long experience working with families who struggle with addiction, we believe the requirements of this bill would hinder our ability to effectively serve infants and families. And further, that the families, loved ones and children would not be best served with these expectations. For example, the expectation that a parent have an adoption homestudy completed by an assessor puts an unnecessary barrier in place to keep children safe and to keep families together.

We are confident in the flexibility of the work we do when handling the 41 positive toxicology babies born to residents of our county in 2021. Not every family requires the same level of intervention (i.e. the expectation to complete an inpatient program without any regard to proper assessment) and not every child should enter foster care. In fact, only 2 of the 41 infants entered foster care as a last resort; the other 39 infants are being cared for safely by family. As a *Kinnect to Family* county, we firmly believe in the value of placing children with kin, if a child cannot safely remain at home; and foster care is a last resort. I fear the ramifications of this bill will overwhelm the already bulging foster care system with infants who have capable family members available to care for them. In addition, I fear the unintended consequence of steering mothers away from seeking pre-natal medical care and a reduction of hospital deliveries due to the fear their infant will be removed.

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DIVISION	PHONE	FAX	EMAIL
Public Assistance	419-334-3891	419-332-2156	<a href="mailto:Sandusky-County-Public-Assistance@jfs.ohio.gov">Sandusky-County-Public-Assistance@jfs.ohio.gov</a>
Children Services	419-334-8708	419-355-5329	<a href="mailto:Sandusky-County-Children-Services@jfs.ohio.gov">Sandusky-County-Children-Services@jfs.ohio.gov</a>
Child Support	419-334-2909	419-355-5344	<a href="mailto:Sandusky-County-Child-Support@jfs.ohio.gov">Sandusky-County-Child-Support@jfs.ohio.gov</a>
OhioMeansJobs	419-332-2169	419-332-2721	<a href="mailto:OmjSandCo@jfs.ohio.gov">OmjSandCo@jfs.ohio.gov</a>



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On behalf of my dedicated staff serving in the child welfare field, we oppose SB216. I am urging the Committee to do the same. Thank you for considering the needs of families and children across Ohio.

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