

House Bill 352

Proponent Testimony, April 23, 2024

Chair Pavliga, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brewer and members of the House Behavioral Health Committee:

I am thankful for the opportunity to offer written remarks in support of House Bill 352. I am writing as an adoptive parent, former foster parent, and resident of NE Ohio. I am a member of the Adoption Network Cleveland and serve on the Public Policy Committee.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can have profound and long-lasting effects on individuals and communities. ACEs impact various aspects of life, including mental health, physical health, educational attainment, and social well-being.

In 2008, we became foster parents for the first time. Outside of the pre-certification training, we had no experience or exposure to trauma informed education and the impact to children in care. During our time as foster parents, which spanned nearly ~6 years (off and on) and included seven placements and two adoptions, we found that social workers were trauma trained and attuned to ACEs. However, many supporting pillars including educators, physicians, psychiatrists, court systems, and the community at large, lacked awareness, understanding and appropriate training. These gaps within various sectors limited the availability of appropriate, trauma focused resources to better serve and support children in our care.

We spent a significant amount of time educating our support system, including family, friends, practitioners, educators and physicians. The lack of trauma informed support significantly increased the time to establish appropriate professional care and services, which negatively impacted their day-to-day success.

As of September, 2023, Ohio had approximately 16,700 children in foster care. ¹ Trauma is not isolated to the foster care system. Many adults and families experience traumatic life events, which underscores the importance of addressing this issue comprehensively. I'm optimistic that the study commission in HB 352 will engage appropriate specialists and stakeholders which will aid in additional data points, insight and strategies to identify and support children and families who have experienced trauma.

As a parent and NE Ohio resident, I'm grateful this important matter is being addressed. I support House Bill 352 to create an Adverse Childhood Experiences Study Commission in Ohio.

If you have any questions, please contact me at sarasherman_1@yahoo.com or 916-534-3042.

Sincerely,

Sara Sherman

¹[Understanding Ohio Foster Care Stats - Pathway Caring for Children \(pathwaycfc.org\)](https://pathwaycaringforchildren.org/understanding-ohio-foster-care-stats)