

House Behavioral Health Committee
Proponent testimony HB352
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Chair Pavliga, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brewer, and members of the Committee, my name is Lysette Arnold, and I am with the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county public children's services agencies (PCSAs) that advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

PCSAO appreciates Rep. Baker's and Rep. Carruthers's leadership in highlighting the effects that trauma has on Ohio's children and families and in bringing forward HB352 to address that trauma. We would also like to thank you for amending the bill to add representatives from child welfare, Medicaid, school psychologists, and behavioral health providers.

The Centers for Disease Control defines adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, as potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years), including such events as, for example:

- experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- witnessing violence in the home or community
- having a family member attempt or die by suicide.

ACES also include aspects of a child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with:

- substance use problems.
- mental health problems
- instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison.

ACES are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adulthood and can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential.

According to a 2021 report published by the Ohio State University and PCSAO's Ohio START program¹, a significant majority of children in the child welfare system, ranging from 62% to 80%, have faced multiple traumatic events in their lives, with approximately 34% experiencing three or more such exposures. These children have often endured past traumatic events in addition to the abuse or neglect that led to their involvement. These experiences range from

Dellor, E. D., Yoon, S., Bunger, A. C., Himmeger, M., & Freishtler, B. (2021). Benchmarking Trauma in Child Welfare: A Brief Report. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 08862605211038324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605211038324>

hospitalizations for medical conditions to exposure to domestic and community violence and are often recurring and frequent.

These findings highlight the pervasive nature of trauma and its long-lasting effects among the vulnerable population that our agencies serve every day. That is why PCSAO supports HB352 and the creation of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study Commission. With focused, strong leadership, the commission can help ensure that Ohio addresses and helps reduce ACES, leading to stronger families and stronger communities.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me with any questions.