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House Families and Aging Committee

House Bill 512 – Proponent Testimony

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Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Families and Aging Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony on House Bill 512.

House Bill 512 is a necessary step to address the shortage of crisis stabilization options for children in custody of a public children services agency (PCSA). Many county PCSAs are combined with county job and family services agencies under the umbrella of the boards of county commissioners. Commissioners see firsthand the challenges of placing children with complex needs and high acuity behaviors.

The bill instructs the Department of Children and Youth, along with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and Department of Developmental Disabilities, to create a streamlined process for licensure of emergency placement facilities. Ohio's shortage of these beds and facilities places additional stress on children. In some cases, these children, who are in a crisis situation, spend nights in hotels or a local government agency while caseworkers call hundreds of facilities, including in other states, looking for placement because there are no other options. The licensure process contained in House Bill 512 will utilize many of the same qualifications and practices that currently exist in these facilities. These changes will result in additional options for children to receive timely assessments, treatment, and support.

Coordination is the only path forward in addressing the current placement crisis. Counties cannot act alone. CCAO supports House Bill 512's provision to ensure that the Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council and their agencies continue to work with stakeholders to identify solutions. Including not only county representatives in this discussion but also representatives from mental health, developmental disabilities, and hospitals is crucial to caring for Ohio's children.

CCAO thanks Representative Pavliga for introducing this legislation and respectfully asks the committee to favorably report House Bill 512.

