



**Big Brothers Big Sisters**  
of Central Ohio

April 27, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Smith  
Chairman, Ohio House Finance Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives  
Riffe Center for Government and the Arts  
77 South High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Smith,

It is with great passion and compassion that I write to urge you and your colleagues to reconsider an amendment previously offered by Rep. LaTourette (resubmitted to be part of the omnibus amendment as HC2284) relative to the provision of TANF funding for Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) to mentor children experiencing trauma in their life, including children whose parents are incarcerated (see amendment enclosed).

I had the great privilege of testifying before the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the House Finance Committee (see testimony enclosed). ***As you will read in my testimony, Big Brothers Big Sisters provides consistent, stable one-to-one mentoring relationships to children experiencing trauma. Our staff provides one-to-one professional support to every child, family and mentor throughout the entire match relationship, which often lasts for many years and in some cases, a lifetime.*** In this and many additional ways, Big Brothers Big Sisters' mentoring differs from other models, including group mentoring programs offered by well-respected programs such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Junior Achievement and City Year.

***Independent national research specific to children who participated in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program proves that our outcome-based, data-driven mentoring model has a positive impact on children's lives.*** In fact, Little Brothers and Little Sisters are proven to be more likely to have develop good relationships with their parents and peers and more confident in their schoolwork. They are also less likely to initiate risky behaviors; in fact, they are:

- 46% less likely to initiate drug use;
- 52% less likely to skip school; and
- 33% less likely to hit someone.

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BBBS of Springfield, Inc. • BBBS of South Central Ohio, Inc. • BBBS of East Central Ohio, Inc. • BBBS of Greater Cleveland, Inc.



In the past, we have favorably, efficiently and promptly used TANF funding for children who have one or both parents incarcerated. Rep. LaTourette's amendment expands the use of TANF funds to provide mentoring to the thousands of Ohio children who are living a life of trauma due to the struggle that their parents are having with addiction. We know that in your district, and many others, grandparents are raising their grandchildren because mom and dad are suffering from addiction or incarceration. Without the involvement of a positive adult mentor, these children are likely headed in the same direction.

The success of Big Brothers Big Sisters speaks for itself. The Ohio children of incarcerated parents who were served with funding provided by the 2016-2017 biennial budget are case in point. We measure outcomes in eight major categories, including scholastic efficacy, academic performance, attitudes toward risky behaviors, and truancy. In 2015-2016, 96.8% of the Ohio children of incarcerated parents served by our program reported improvements in at least one major category and 82.1% reported improvement in at least two. ***This data shows a very positive impact in outcomes that will change the course of the lives of Ohio's most at-risk children!***

We are grateful for the efforts of Rep LaTourette to attempt to amend HB 49 on behalf of Ohio's 25 Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies throughout the state. We fervently and respectfully ask for your support of including HC2284 in the omnibus amendment.

Respectfully,

  
Elizabeth Martinez  
President and CEO

EM/dcm

Cc: Rep. Sarah LaTourette  
Speaker Clifford A. Rosenberger  
Rep. Mark Romanchuk