



**SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Chair Oelslager

Vice Chair Manning

Ranking Member Skindell

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I am here today to do one very important thing: to say "**Thank You**" to all of the members of this Committee, and to Senator Gardner, who worked with us every evening to make certain that the Crisis Stabilization Fund was created to support children, youth and their families who need a continuum of treatment and support services that can be accessed through the local County Family and Children First Councils at the local and state level.

**Thank you**, because after 33 years of work, we will finally have a source of funding to support the treatment needs of Multi System Youth. *(Please see the document attached to my testimony to learn more about how the unspent TANF funds you are appropriating can be used to support these youth.)*

**Thank you** on behalf of the youth and families who were forced to relinquish custody to local child protection agencies to gain access to services their children needed.

**Thank you** on behalf of the parents who have taken out a second mortgage on their home, sold a second car, and are working two jobs *each* to pay for service for their multi-need children. In the past, these were the parents who had to give up custody of their children to gain access to services, and with your action in this budget, these families have a chance to stay together.

**Thank you** for your message of hope to youth and parents that you send out to the state with your action: you are firmly saying that this is the first day we are all challenged to make sure custody relinquishment is no longer a practice in Ohio for any Multi System Youth.

**Thank you**, because in a Budget cycle that is very, very tight, you have listened and supported the need to provide greater support to county child protection agencies, to support youth moving to adulthood, to support kinship care givers with for paying for child care, and to families trying their best to find the services their Multi Need Youth.

**Thank you** to the members of both caucuses who spent hours and hours reviewing amendments while struggling to accomplish their priorities in times of lower revenues. **Thank you** for not forgetting about these youngsters who and for saying, "You are very important and we are going to support you and your families."

**Thank you** to amazing staff in Senator Oelslager's office for being so very pleasant no matter how many people called asking the same questions over and over again, as I did.

**Thank you** to each and every one of you, and to the other State Senators for being very " tall" as Abraham Lincoln said, "you are never as tall as you can be,as when you stoop down to help a child or youth." **Thank you** each for being very tall today and for being a part of this important work.

## **ATTACHMENT**

### **Family and Youth in Crisis: Amendment re: Crisis Services State Fund using TANF Carryover Funds**

**Purpose of the Amendment:** The Joint Legislative Committee on Multi System Youth (MSY) made a recommendation to establish a “crisis services fund” to address the unmet and uninsured needs of multi system youth, who are in crisis and in danger of parental custody being relinquished in order to access appropriate services.

- Funding will utilize unspent federal carryover TANF funds from Category 3 and 4 funds, as follows:
  - Category 3: Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and
  - Category 4: Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.
  - These two categories can be spent without regard to eligibility/testing for need. (The funds might also be used pursuant to Category 1 and 2, if the youth meets eligibility criteria.)
  - The federal law allows States to use unspent Federal TANF funds carried over from prior fiscal years
- This would be administered through the Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council.
  - ORC 121.37 (A)(3) specifies that a referral of a multi system youth can be made by a local entity to the Cabinet Council
  - The state works with the county Family and Children First (FCF) to develop a treatment plan
  - The state works with the county FCF to develop a plan, and determine what funds the county can contribute and what funds the state can contribute.
- The plan is always a mixture of resources. The Crisis Funds could be “braided” together with other local funds to provide the needed services.
- The Director of the Cabinet Council would provide written guidance regarding the requirements to access the crisis funds.

### **Examples of the Types of Community Supports and Services to help Prevent Custody Relinquishment**

Based on the testimony to the Joint Legislative Committee and discussion with parents and advocates, the following are examples of supports that would be helpful to prevent custody relinquishment, by augmenting other resources that the local community has already available:

- peer supports for youth and their parents,
- respite for parents or caretakers,
- tutoring and education assistance, job training and placement,
- independent living skills ,
- special equipment,
- transportation,
- Big Brother and Big Sister types of programs.