

Senate Finance Committee Testimony by Mark Butler, DRE of Holy Spirit Church, Columbus

June 15, 2017

To the Chair, Senator Oeslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and Members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Mark Butler. Last week, I shared with you the story my son Andrew and how my wife and I were forced to surrender custody of Andrew so that he could receive much needed residential treatment. I spoke as a parent who had to endure the pain of custody relinquishment and as an Ohioan who believes that stories like mine should not be happening in 2017.

Today I am here in gratitude for the support for multi-system youth in the Senate Substitute Bill to H.B. 49. The funding provided in this bill will help families like mine get the help they desperately need without giving up custody of their sons and daughters.

The day that I had to call Franklin County Children's Services to begin the process of surrendering custody of Andrew was one of the hardest days of my life. No words will ever convey the pain and sorrow my wife and I felt.

The day they came to take Andrew away, we sat together waiting for the van to arrive. We held hands in silence since Andrew had no way of understanding what was happening. I remember thinking about how I would not wish that kind of pain on anyone.



I am very happy with the positive direction our state is taking for providing services for our multi-system youth. On behalf of my family and families like mine across Ohio, I thank you for your support and the hard work you will undertake to secure this funding.

I'm attaching a message of support from the Catholic Diocese of Columbus for your review, and I will now answer any questions you may have.



Office for Social Concerns
Catholic Diocese of Columbus

Information and Response NETWORK

Support Multi-System Youth in Ohio Budget

There has to be a better way for caring parents not to face a decision to relinquish custody of their child to a child protection agency in order to access necessary services.



Background

The Ohio General Assembly recently convened a [Joint Legislative Committee on Multi-System Youth](#). Multi-system youth refers to a child or youth with significant mental health, addiction and/or developmental delays who is involved or at risk of being involved with child protection and/or juvenile justice due to not being able to access the right services or supports to remain stable and in their home.

While local programs successfully work with families of children with special needs, some cases have intensive needs that exhaust the resources of the family and community. Caring parents find out their insurance plan (commercial or Medicaid) will not pay for the intensive in-home or residential treatment their child truly needs. In order to give proper care to their child, parents are told to go to court to relinquish custody of their child to children services. It is a gut-wrenching process for caring families who want to keep their families intact but just need the appropriate support.

Read about a local Catholic family's story

[Senate Testimony by Mark Butler, DRE of Holy Spirit Church, Columbus](#)

[Columbus Dispatch Article about the Butler Family](#)

To address this situation and others, the Joint Legislative Committee on Multi-System Youth issued recommendations. To read the recommendations, [CLICK HERE](#). The recommendation for funding is \$33M for years 2018 and 2019 for a Crisis Stabilization Fund.

Unfortunately, this funding was not included in the Ohio House passed version of the state budget. The budget is now being considered in the Ohio Senate. Parents and advocates are asking for at least \$5M to start addressing the recommendations.

Contact your Ohio Senator and Ohio Representative

Message: "Add funding for the multi-system youth task force recommendations, including the establishment of a state level youth and family crisis stabilization fund."

[Ohio Legislative Contact Directory](#)

Ways to Act

- Call your legislator.
- Schedule a legislative visit (individually or as a parish group)*
- Send a letter or email.
- Write a letter to the editor.

Other Pending Legislation Issued by Catholic Conference of Ohio

[Budget Alert: Health and Human Services](#)

Issues pending in Senate.

[Unborn Protection Alert](#)

Regarding legislation that treats fetal remains with respect and further protects unborn children.

[Death Penalty Alert](#)

Regarding legislation that will prohibit persons with serious mental illness from being executed.

Sent by

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