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Civil Justice
Criminal Justice
Higher Education
Co-Chair, Criminal Sentencing
Subcommittee

Tavia Galonski
State Representative

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and my colleagues of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 8.

In 2017 alone, the state of Ohio had 4,293 reported opioid related overdose deaths, making Ohio's opioid death toll the second highest in the country.¹ In my own district, so many constituents have fallen victim to the opioid crisis. Most notably, a 6-year-old girl living in the Akron neighborhood of Kenmore overdosed on carfentanil by walking barefoot across a carpet where the drugs had accidentally been spilled. Thankfully her life was saved by medical professionals utilizing naloxone. Her parents, however, currently have their respective cases pending in federal court for "[bringing] huge quantities of deadly fentanyl and carfentanil into Akron, threatening the lives of so many of our neighbors, friends, and family," according to U.S. Attorney Justin Herdman².

The opioid epidemic has had a catastrophic impact on the entire country, but especially on the state of Ohio. This isn't news. We have known this long before many of us were even in the legislature. Tackling this issue is arguably one of the most challenging issues facing our state because there is a wide array of impacts both directly and indirectly.

House Bill 8 aims to focus on the children who are being placed into foster homes as a result of the opioid epidemic. In every single county, our system is overwhelmed both with the volume and cost of placing children in foster care. It is our job as legislators to protect our most vulnerable population by ensuring them good housing as they are recovering from the unfortunate trauma they have already endured.

House Bill 8 will revise the requirements for foster caregiver training by eliminating statutory requirements and giving JFS more flexibility to ensure more efficient training, licensure, and approval. The bill allows twenty percent of pre-placement training to be available online for both convenience and efficiency. By cutting back the red tape, foster families are able to put a greater focus on what they need to do to prepare to care for a child. House Bill 8 renews our promise to put children and families first, and begins to heal some of the wounds created by our near worst-in-the-nation opioid crisis.

¹ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/opioid-summaries-by-state/ohio-opioid-summary>

² <https://www.ohio.com/news/20190426/opioids-60-minutes-heads-to-china-and-follows-trail-to-akron>

35th House District

Summit County

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Committees

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Tavia Galonski State Representative

I am proud to introduce this important piece of legislation with my Republican counterpart, Representative Manchester, because this is not a partisan issue nor a regional issue. The opioid epidemic and its subsequent effects impact every single one of our districts. We may not be able to render a resolution quickly, but that does not mean we cannot stand by while our children have their lives turned upside down. It is time that we focus on not only the abuser, but also those who the abuser affects. Only then can we put an end to this epidemic.

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and my colleagues of the Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 8. I stand open for any questions from the committee.