



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

Proponent Testimony on HB 8

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Good morning, Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Committee. I am Scott Britton with the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county Public Children Services Agencies that advocates for and promotes child protection program excellence and sound public policy for safe children, stable families and supportive communities.

PCSAO and our member agencies support HB 8. We appreciate Rep. Manchester's and Rep. Galonski's focus on the critical issue of recruiting and retaining foster caregivers and for their leadership in bringing this bill forward. Children do best in a family. When children cannot stay in their own homes, they need trained, committed foster caregivers available to meet their needs and partner with children services agencies and with birth parents.

Knowing that it was time for an assessment of Ohio's foster caregiver training system, PCSAO advocated for the establishment of a Foster Care Advisory Group in HB 49-132. I served on that group, convened by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and I also serve as co-chair of the Ohio Child Welfare Training Program State Steering Committee; OCWTP oversees mandatory training for both public agency caseworkers and foster caregivers. The advisory group concluded its work in spring 2018 by producing a report. That report's recommendations regarding foster caregiver training are reflected in HB 8.

Broadly speaking, HB 8 removes both the number of hours for pre-placement and continuing training and the prescribed training topics from ORC and gives the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services the authority to establish both via rule. In addition, the bill permits up to 20% of the preplacement training hours to be completed online and directs that continuing training should be in accordance with the foster caregiver's needs assessment and continuing training plan. These changes will result in training being more accessible and better targeted to meeting foster caregivers' needs, based upon the foster children placed in their homes.

You should also be aware that recent federal changes to child welfare contained in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 call for significant changes to the foster care system to be rolled out by 2021. These changes, known as the Family First Prevention Services Act, include provisions to streamline foster care licensing. Having the specifics of training requirements in OAC rather than in ORC will enable ODJFS to respond nimbly to any changes that Ohio may need to implement in order to come into compliance with these federal changes.

For all of these reasons, PCSAO and our member agencies support HB 8. We appreciate the General Assembly's commitment to support Ohio's foster caregivers so that every child in care receives the love, support and services they need. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.