



Representative Phil Plummer
Representative Susan Manchester

Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 4

February 11, 2021

House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee

PLUMMER:

Good morning Chair Manchester, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Liston, and Members of the House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 4, which will address children services with regards to child abuse and neglect reporting.

This legislation works to prevent any cases from falling through the cracks. In 2019, 10 year old Takoda Collins, was tragically killed after years of child abuse. The Dayton Daily News obtained records from the Montgomery County Dispatch Center, which showed a Dayton Public School employee reported their concerns of abuse in 2018. More reports were made prior to Takoda's death as well. We believe the system failed Takoda Collins and changes must be made to prevent this from happening again.

House Bill 4 addresses the requirements and oversight of Ohio's public children services agencies' memorandum of understanding, the reporting of child abuse and neglect cases, and a reporter's right to information. House Bill 4 ensures follow up is taking place. Requires a public children services agency (PCSA) that receives a report of child abuse or neglect to notify the appropriate law enforcement agency in accordance with the county's MOU requirements on sharing information between a PCSA and law enforcement agency. We want to make sure law enforcement is involved when necessary. This also helps prevent any vital information from being lost. We believe more people who are collaboratively working on the case, can help improve the outcome for the child. My joint sponsor Rep. Manchester is going to explain more on the MOUs.

MANCHESTER:

Existing statute requires each public children services agency (PCSA) to prepare a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines their standard terms and policies regarding cases of child abuse or neglect. MOUs should also have the objective to eliminate all unnecessary interviews of children who are the subject of reports of child abuse or neglect; or when feasible, providing for only one interview of a child who is the subject of a report of child abuse or neglect.

House Bill 4 will expand on current statute by requiring an MOU to include language which specifies that Ohio law

requires a PCSA to disclose confidential information discovered during a child abuse or neglect investigation to any federal, state, or local government entity. The MOUs will also be required to describe what information should be shared between a PCSA and law enforcement agency and how. The MOU should also include investigative material that both agencies are prohibited from sharing with the public. House Bill 4 will require compliance of the county's MOU regarding reporting between PCSAs and law enforcement.

HB 4 permits both mandatory and permissive reporters of child abuse or neglect to request and receive certain information relating to the report and the child. The bill also requires that a PCSA provides written notice of receipt of report within seven days, via U.S. mail or email, if the reporter provides their name and contact information while filing the report. The same process for notice will be expected following the close of an investigation.

Through the bill, each proposed memorandum of understanding should go into effect following county review and approval. It must be posted on the county's general website as a resource. The legislation also establishes an annual audit through the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services for each county's MOU to review and evaluate any necessary updates to the terms and procedures. JFS would be required to provide a model MOU, resources listing current MOUS, and oversight for each PCSA's MOU to ensure and support compliance.

We look forward to answering any questions. Thank you.