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Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 239.

Like most industries across the country, adoption and foster care agencies are struggling to find employees to carry out services. The state of Ohio has many children in need of homes. This was already a problem, but the pandemic has exacerbated this crisis. SB 239 was introduced to help alleviate some staffing issues.

Originally, this bill expanded eligibility to perform adoption and foster care home assessments. However, since this language was added to the recently enacted House Bill 4, we removed that piece from SB 239.

SB 239 seeks to address workforce issues when hiring professional treatment staff. These are the staff members hired to do work such as rehabilitative services, home studies, clinical directions, and supervising treatment of children. In seeking parity between public and private foster care agencies, SB 239 removes the licensure requirement for people employed at private agencies and requires the same education by those at public agencies. This bill also removes certain training requirements for staff employed at private agencies that would only be relevant for those working at a public agency. Additionally, SB 239 requires ODJFS to work with private child placing agencies and private noncustodial agencies when creating a future comprehensive, competency-based professional treatment staff training program.

Now more than ever, there is a critical need to support children and families navigating adoption and fostering. The pandemic has only increased the stress on the system, and

SB 239 aims to alleviate some of the workforce woes that hinder the ability to get Ohio's children into safe homes.

Senate Bill 239 had no opponents and passed unanimously out of the Senate Health Committee as well as on the Senate Floor. Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 239. I am happy to answer any questions from the committee.