



**Matt Dolan**  
**State Senator, 24th District**

Senate Building  
Rm. 127  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Phone: 614.466.8056  
dolan@ohiosenate.gov

**Nickie J. Antonio**  
**State Senator, 23rd District**

Senate Building  
Rm. 228  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
Phone: 614.466.5123  
antonio@ohiosenate.gov

SB 167 Sponsor Testimony  
Senate Health Committee  
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Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 167 on behalf of Senator Antonio and myself. The purpose of this bill is to clearly define what a crisis nursery is and to provide a path to those who wish to open and operate in the future.

Children's Crisis Care Facilities (CCCF) provide temporary care to children ages 0-12 that are at risk for abuse or neglect. They are a proven early intervention service that strengthen and preserve families, support healthy child development, and reduce foster care placements - which can save tens of millions of dollars in foster care costs across our state.

Across Ohio, there is broad recognition that we are facing a foster care crisis. Our communities are struggling to find foster families and public children service agencies are often forced to look beyond their county and even state borders to find foster homes.

There are three CCCFs currently licensed by the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services: Blessing House in Lorain, Brigid's Path in Dayton, and Providence House in Cleveland. However with the opioid epidemic sweeping Ohio, more crisis care nurseries could be licensed to meet the unique needs of the community in which they operate.

Recognizing Ohio now has two distinct models that exist under the crisis nursery statute, this legislation creates clear regulatory guidelines to better capture the two unique models by creating a new statute to govern Residential Infant Care Centers (RICCs). Unlike CCCFs, RICCs focus solely on improved care for newborn babies under one year of age and for family or caregivers affected by addiction. Under this legislation, an entity currently licensed as a CCCF may apply for automatic licensure as a RICC. The bill instructs ODJFS to promulgate rules for RICCs, but does not require a deadline for the rules to be created. To prevent any service disruptions, the legislation permits RICCs to continue operating based off the Administrative Code for CCCFs until new rules are promulgated.

This bill also makes the following changes to ease regulatory burdens for CCCFs and RICCs:

- Increase the time that children can stay at a crisis nursery from 60 days to 90 days to accommodate parent inpatient treatment and/or secure affordable housing for homeless families;

- Permit administrative staff, interns and volunteers to count toward required staff ratios in emergency situations if they have received training and are supervised by staff (necessary in the event of staff illness, inclement weather, etc);
- Permit volunteers and contracted transportation providers that have passed a background check and received training to transport children when needed;
- Include CCCFs and RICCs in the Sex Offender Registration and Notification (SORN) residency restrictions already established for schools and day-care centers;
- Creates the “Family Preservation Center” subcategory for CCCFs and RICCs with the primary purpose to preserve families through preteen foster care diversion practices and programs, using evidence-based practices for family case management, parent education and trauma screening and healing-centered interventions, which aligns with the Federal Family First Preservation Services Act.

Thank you, Chairman Huffman, for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony today on SB 167. I welcome any questions from the committee.