



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

Senate Health Committee
Interested Party testimony SB239
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Mary D. Wachtel
Director of Public Policy
mary@pcsao.org
614.224.5802

Chair Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, I am pleased to submit this written interested party testimony on behalf of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county public children services agencies (PCSAs) that advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

PCSAO appreciates Sen. Blessing's leadership and commitment to address workforce challenges impacting children and families served by the children services system. Protecting children and strengthening families is crucial to strong communities and a strong Ohio.

PCSAO is supportive of the bill's provisions regarding efforts assessors. Expanding the pool of professionals who can, with training, conduct home assessments for foster homes and adoptive homes makes sense and is needed.

However, PCSAO is concerned with the bill's provisions regarding professional treatment staff. As defined in current OAC, 5101:2-1-01, *Children services definitions*, and as proposed to be defined in SB239 Sec. 5101.57 (A), professional treatment staff are a narrow group of the workforce that provides services to children and families in specialized foster homes. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) will soon finalize plans for a redesigned tiered foster care system to be effective Oct. 1, 2022. The new system will replace Ohio's current specialized foster homes by defining additional tiers (levels) of foster care capable of accepting

placements of children who require more intense services than family foster care. Therefore, it is PCSAO's belief that the new tiered foster care system should drive policy defining professional treatment staff and qualifications of staff who provide those services. In other words, it is premature to amend ORC at this point based on the current specialized foster care system when a new tiered foster care system will be implemented in ten months.

In addition, PCSAO would like to clarify that, while OAC permits public children services agency (PCSA) staff to serve as professional treatment staff without being licensed, that is not how PCSAs practice. The small number of PCSAs that license and support specialized foster care homes do not provide the clinical services included within the definition of professional treatment staff; instead, the PCSAs contract with local providers for those services.

We are aware of some initial conversations regarding professional treatment staff language among interested parties and hope to continue that dialogue with bill sponsors and interested parties to craft legislation that will strengthen Ohio's foster care system.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me with any questions.