



Representative Phil Plummer

Representative Susan Manchester

Sponsor Testimony: Amended Substitute House Bill 4

June 22, 2021

Senate Judiciary Committee

**PLUMMER:**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Amended Substitute House Bill 4, which will address children services agencies with regards to child abuse and neglect reporting.

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.

#### MANCHESTER:

Under current law, each public children services agency (PCSA) is required to prepare a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines their standard terms and policies regarding cases of child abuse or neglect. House Bill 4 expands on current law 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 bill ensures following up is taking place by requiring a PCSA that receives a report of child abuse or neglect to notify the appropriate law enforcement agency.

To better ensure cases are handled and resolved, House Bill 4 requires that PCSA provides written notice of a receipt of report or close of an investigation within seven days, via U.S. mail or email, if the reporter's contact information is provided. The legislation also permits both mandatory and permissive reporters of child abuse or neglect to request and receive certain information relating to the report and the child.

Finally, the MOU must be reviewed and signed off by representatives of the county and audited by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services every two years to ensure compliance. The MOU must also be posted on the county's general website as a resource.

This legislation will also create the Children Service Ombudsman Program and expand the types of individuals and educational disciplines allowed as qualifications for foster care/adoption home study assessors. The Children Service Ombudsman office will be tasked with investigating and resolving concerns and complaints from and on behalf of children and families. Both of these provisions are recommendations made by the Governor's Children's Services Transformation Advisory Council and were developed through the input and feedback from numerous stakeholders across Ohio.

House Bill 4 was unanimously voted out of the House Families, Aging and Human Services Committee and passed the House Chamber with a vote of 92-2. Thank you for your time and consideration of this legislation. Representative Plummer and I look forward to answering any questions.