



LUCAS COUNTY
**CHILDREN
SERVICES**

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Senate Judiciary Committee
Opponent Testimony SB216
February 1, 2022
Matthew Carter
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To the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Matthew Carter, I am a Supervisor with Lucas County Children Services. The agency that I work for is tasked with the protection of children and to lead the community in the protection of children within Lucas County, Ohio.

I am openly concerned with the tenets and some of the provisions contained in SB216, also known as Dylan's Law. The bill, as it stands, would require all children born exposed to substances to enter foster care for a minimum of six months. This would be detrimental to children and parents alike who are dealing with the trauma that surrounds substance abuse. The initial days and months after a child is born are some of the most important times for bonding between a parent and child. Limiting visitation and/or adding a required stay in foster care for any child diminishes a parent's right to be an active participant in their child's life. The disease of addiction, while serious, should not be the primary factor considered in whether a child can see or be with a parent. There are many natural supports that child welfare agencies across the nation can put in place to reduce and minimize the risk of addiction to a child. As many in the field of child welfare will tell you, increased contact and visitation with a child is a correlating factor in successful reunification with children. Furthermore, adding more burden and stress to an already strained foster care system within Ohio would seem counterproductive to the tenets of the Family First Act, which became law in 2021.

I fully agree that our nation must do more to address substance abuse and the children that are by no fault of their own victims. I believe that this legislation has strong intent but that the measures contained within it should be modified to include support and compassion for those struggling with addiction.

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration as it pertains to this piece of legislation. Lucas County Children Services remains committed to the protection of children in Lucas County. We face, daily, the impact of substance abuse on children within our community and there are strong supports that we lean on through community partners to continue addressing this issue. These partners, including but not limited to families of those impacted, are treatment facilities, inpatient and outpatient mental health and substance abuse agencies, hospitals, law enforcement, and medical providers. I urge the committee to oppose SB216 and I invite the committee or committee members to speak with me so that we can partner in finding new and innovative solutions to tackle addiction within our state.



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