

*Protect Children . . .
Strengthen Families!*

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2/8/2022

Opponent Testimony SB216
Senate Judiciary Committee
Sarah Newland, Executive Director
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To members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, this written testimony is on behalf of Allen County Children Services. Allen County Children Services mission is to protect children by supporting and strengthening families in partnership with the community. As the executive director for the past year of Allen County Children Services, I have had the privilege of leading a committed team that each day responds to families in crisis struggling with substance use.

I am writing to share opposition to Senate Bill 216, *Enact Dylan's Law*. Certainly, the intent of protecting infants is one we all support and advocate for. The concern of substances impacting infants is real as Allen County receives reports on average, five times a month of an infant born drug exposed. However, the proposed legislation severely restricts our Agency's ability to respond to each infant individually and uniquely.

Our Agency responds to each situation assessing each family's strengths and needs, utilizing safety plans, family supports, community referrals and when necessary, out of home placement to protect these children. Parents can often continue to maintain contact in a safe manner while they work on obtaining and maintaining sobriety. In addition, we have been fortunate to have the OhioSTART and the MOMS program in Allen County. We have seen when the right community services and supports are in place, parents can effectively parent their children while ensuring child safety. We believe this proposed legislation would contradict research and practice in the areas of substance use treatment and child welfare. Each family and response need to be tailored to their needs and strengths. For these reasons we oppose SB216 and urge the Committee to do the same. I am available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah N. Newland".

Executive Director

Allen County Children Services