



Morrow County Job and Family Services

619 West Marion Road, Mt. Gilead, Ohio 43338

Sundie Brown
DIRECTOR

Office
419.947.5444

Janeen Wert

INCOME

MAINTENANCE

Office 419.947.9111

Fax 419.947.9115

1.800.668.6458

A Collabor8 County

1.844.640.6446

Jennifer Kennon

WORKFORCE

Office 419.946.8480

Fax 419.946.5181

Atty. Kylie Ehrhart

OFFICE OF

CHILD SUPPORT

Office 419.947.9111

1.800.533.0353

Fax 419.947.8095

Denise Sayre-Rogers

FISCAL &

PERSONNEL

Office 419.947.9111

Fax 419.947.1076

Lisa A. Peake

FAMILY &

CHILDREN

SERVICES

Office 419.947.9111

1.877.947.5437

Fax 419.947.5447

Ohio
MEANS
Jobs.

Morrow
County

A proud partner of the
American Job Center
Network

February 3, 2022

Senate Judiciary Committee

Opponent Testimony SB216

Dreama Kay Reese, Esq.

Family and Children Services Attorney

Morrow County Job and Family Services

dreama.reese@jfs.ohio.gov

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee: On behalf of Dreama Kay Reese, Esq., Family and Children Services Attorney, Morrow County Job and Family Services, I thank you for this opportunity to present opposition testimony on Senate Bill 216, *Dylan's Law*. The mission of Morrow County Job and Family Services (hereinafter, "MCJFS") is to provide residents with the highest quality professional services – medical, financial, and supportive – creating the opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency and strengthen families. The mandate of Morrow County Job and Family Services, Family and Children Services Unit, is to ensure child welfare and safety. I have observed that MCJFS' unofficial motto lies somewhere between "All boots on the ground" and "Get it done."

S.B. 216 is contrary to the Family First Prevention Services Act, to evidence-based programs (i.e., OhioSTART and MOMS), to current evidence-based practices in child welfare and to the existing statutory framework (i.e., best interest of the child, reasonable efforts to prevent removal and/or reunify, intensive efforts to locate and engage appropriate and willing kinship care providers, QRTP findings and level of care assessments, etc.). By way of example and not by limitation, S.B. 216 mandates drug testing by public children services agencies (PCSAs) upon report of a substance-exposed infant and the filing of a Complaint upon a positive drug screen, without apparent prosecutorial discretion. S.B. 216 mandates pro forma adjudicatory findings and pro forma dispositional orders, including requirements that substance-exposed infants be maintained in PCSA custody for a minimum of *six (6) months* and that mothers and fathers be denied custody, visitation and/or contact with their infant child, without apparent judicial discretion.

S.B. 216 Fiscal Note and Local Impact Statement estimates that between 13,500 and 15,000 substance-exposed infants are born each year in Ohio and further estimates potentially significant increased annual costs for PCSAs (i.e., placement, case management, legal, treatment and testing costs), Medicaid (i.e., addiction treatment services, health care and foster care placement costs) and juvenile courts (i.e., additional caseloads and case oversight requirements). Mandated out-of-home placement costs alone, for substance-exposed infants with specialized needs for a minimum of six (6) months, pursuant to S.B. 216 could exceed 540 million dollars.

I am awed each day by the commitment, competence, and compassion of MCJFS staff, caseworkers, supervisors, administrators, and Director of MCJFS, Sundie Brown, the Morrow County Juvenile Court judges, magistrates and staff, and our community partners, particularly in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, budgetary constraints and a workforce crisis. Families are strengthened in our community in the homes of children, siblings, mothers, fathers, grandparents, relatives, and kinship care providers. Families are strengthened in foster homes, treatment foster homes, group homes, independent living homes, and residential treatment facilities. Families are strengthened in courtrooms, schools, hospitals, police departments and in the offices of physicians, counselors, treatment providers, advocates, attorneys and guardians *ad litem*. All boots on the ground, as it were, to get it done, and the necessary resources, services and supports to address the needs of at-risk children and families.

Although I oppose S.B. 216 and urge the Committee to do the same, I write in shared grief and sadness for Dylan Groves, the infant child in honor of whom Senate Bill 216 is named. I thank you for your continued commitment to child welfare, addiction and recovery services, and a measured legislative response to this tragedy. I am available to answer any questions that you may have.

Respectfully,

Dreama K. Reese, Esq.

MORROW COUNTY
Love life. Live rural.