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May 16, 2018

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SB125

Chairman Ginter, Vice Chair LaTourette, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee, my name is Amy Roehrenbeck, and I am the Executive Director for the Ohio CSEA Directors' Association (OCDA). OCDA is a membership organization of county child support enforcement agencies (CSEAs), dedicated to strengthening Ohio's child support program. I have been in the child support program for seventeen years, first as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for the Morrow County CSEA, and then with OCDA. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to present proponent testimony on Senate Bill 125, sponsored by Senator Beagle.

SB125 is a companion bill to HB366, sponsored by Representative Gavarone. This committee heard extensive testimony on HB366, ultimately reporting it out unanimously, with the House voting unanimously to pass it earlier this year.

SB125 is a comprehensive package of updates to Ohio's child support guidelines, which resulted from many years of research, conversation, and compromise between multiple stakeholders. The goal of SB125 is to have child support orders that are based on the ability to pay, with the ultimate goal of consistent, regular payments of support to families.

I have provided a high-level snapshot of the major components of SB125, represented visually as gears. You may remember these gears from HB366. The gears are intended to work together, and the bill will not achieve its intended outcome if any one of these gears is removed. The critical gears include long-overdue and necessary updates to our economic tables, as well as sensible updates to modernize how we treat health care coverage, cash medical support, parenting time, child care, and multiple family orders. Additionally, SB125 moves the child support tables and



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worksheet from the Revised Code to the Administrative Code, to allow for more timely and frequent updates in the tables, based on parameters outlined in statute.

Though the topic of child support can evoke strong emotions, SB125 is, at its heart, a bill about manner, methodology, and math. The bill proposes to make changes in the manner by which we set child support orders, by making updates to factors considered in the calculation of support, such as health care cost, cash medical, and child care, and by adding a factor for parenting time. The guideline worksheet itself has also been overhauled to take into consideration these factors.

The bill is also about methodology, as SB125 updates Ohio's economic tables after 26 years, by implementing the Betson-Rothbarth 4 formula to adjust table amounts to current prices and tax policy, as well as implementing a self-sufficiency reserve to ensure that child support orders for low income individuals are not beyond their ability to pay. I wanted to point out a few additional details about the table updates that are important to know. First, our current economic tables only go out to combined income of \$150,000, which was a high combined income back in 1992, but has led to issues in determining proper child support obligations for parents whose income exceeds this amount. To adjust for the fact that families are now achieving higher incomes, the tables in SB125 will go out beyond \$300,000. This will be especially helpful for private practitioners and courts, and will lessen the amount of cases that require income extrapolation under our current tables.

Second, families in low-income ranges will likely see a decrease in the child support amount they would pay as compared to our current tables, as SB125 adopts a Self-Sufficiency Reserve (SSR) that works (we currently have a Self-Sufficiency Reserve in our tables, but it is based on the Federal Poverty Level from 1992 and it phases out almost immediately). At the same time, however, the updates to our economic tables will result in an increase in support amounts for those in the mid-to-high income ranges, which would be logical given the long span of time since our last update, and the changes to prices of goods and tax policies over the years. Some of these increases will be tempered by the changes SB125 makes to the health insurance credit, the cash medical amounts, and child care cap. It is also important to realize that increases to the table amounts for those outside of the SSR will be split by the parties' income share.

Third, SB125 adjusts the minimum support order from \$50 per month to \$80 per month, to bring the minimum order in line with other table adjustments. This would result in an increase that low-income families could see from our current minimum order amount.

Finally, SB125 is a bill about math. The child support guidelines use decisions made by parties and the courts to input numbers into a calculation to arrive at a child support amount. SB125 does not change parents' abilities to make decisions on things such as custody, health care, or child care. SB125 does not take away the court's discretion to make orders concerning these factors, nor does it remove a court's discretion with regard to deviations in support. The guidelines take these decisions and arrive at a child support amount by way of a mathematical equation. This math is employed by Courts, CSEAs, private practitioners, and parties every day in Ohio. It is time to modernize our child support guidelines, and make changes that are sensible, current, and efficient.

I appreciate your time today and am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

SB125 Child Support Guidelines Revision

Cash Medical And Health Care Coverage Modernization

Cash medical will be modernized, by defining its purpose, ordering it paid in all cases, splitting the amount by income shares, and assigning it when Medicaid is involved. Total out of pocket costs will be taken off the income of the parent(s) providing health care coverage.

Updates

Moves the child support tables and worksheet from the ORC to the OAC to allow for more timely updates.

Economic Tables

This critical update is needed to ensure that the economic tables used to establish and modify child support obligations are timely and reflect the modern economy. Ohio has not updated its economic tables since 1992, which used data from the early to mid-1980's.

Multiple Family Orders

Many of our parents have more than one family to support. SB125 proposes to treat all children the same by providing a standard income deduction for each parent for children not subject to the current order.

Parenting Time Adjustment

Ohio's current economic tables take all of the costs of raising a child and transfer them into the custodial household. SB125 provides for a parenting time adjustment.

Childcare Credit Changes

SB125 proposes to create a cap on the allowable credit given for childcare expenses. A cap will also be created for low-income obligors, to limit the share of childcare cost at 50%.