



Office of the Ohio Public Defender

Timothy Young, State Public Defender

**Testimony in Support of HB137
Mandatory Reporting-Child Abuse
Sponsor Representative Kent**

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of the Ohio Public Defender in support of House Bill 137. I am Niki Clum, the legislative liaison for OPD.

HB 137 is a practical improvement to Ohio's mandatory reporting law, and as such, OPD supports the bill. Though policy priorities differ from lawyer to lawyer, or even through different professions, we all should be able to agree that children are our most vital asset and deserve the most protection our State has to offer.

As defense attorneys, we are bound by a variety ethical rules. We zealously advocate for our clients, the Constitution, and equity while seeking justice for all. We are also mandatory reporters for child abuse and other crimes; regardless of the implications such reporting has for our clients.

HB 137 expands the mandatory reporting laws to protect children by requiring law enforcement and first responders to report abuse and/or suspected abuse. Through their profession, these individuals protect the public and keep Ohioans safe, especially the smallest among us. In that capacity, certainly child abuse is something these individuals can identify. The wide range of latitude for interaction with citizens coupled with community presence make law enforcement officers and first responder a natural fit on the list of mandatory reporters. I ask that you protect Ohio's children and favorably report HB 137.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.