

Ohio Senate
Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Testimony on Amended House Bill 137

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Uecker, Ranking Member Schiavoni and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 137.

My name is Bryan Vitron and I am a Police Officer for the City of Independence. I have been serving in this capacity since 2006. Prior to working in law enforcement, I worked as both a Case Manager and Supervisor for the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services for almost a decade. I believe my experience and background in child welfare and law enforcement allows for a unique perspective on this issue.

As a Police Officer I feel that it is my responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect. We are often the first to respond and interact with children which allows them to feel safe, to collect valuable information and intervene as we collaborate with Children Services to ensure the continued safety of the youth. As a case manager and supervisor while working for Children Services, having law enforcement as a referent, on scene to assist in challenging situations, or as collateral contacts when completing an investigation always proved to be beneficial and ensured that the safety and security of the youth in question was being considered.

While working for the City of Independence, I have made several referrals to Children Services when child abuse or neglect is suspected as well as when domestic violence or drug abuse has occurred. As a first responder in these often-times sensitive and chaotic situations, it is important that the youth feel safe and supported and that accurate information is obtained and reported, providing Child Protective Service workers a first-hand account of the event and access to family members to complete a full investigation.

It is my belief that identifying Police Officers as mandated reporters is vital to protecting our youth. It is my experience that most Police Officers operate as mandated reporters when child abuse and neglect is suspected, therefore it is imperative that this partnership become formalized to consistently allow for our vulnerable youth to feel safe and valued by those individuals in the community identified to protect them.

I fully support passing HB 137 into law and welcome the opportunity to work as a team with Child Protective Services.

Thank You