



Job and Family Services

Director Kellijo Jeffries Ph.D., MSW, LSW

Board of Commissioners

Sabrina Christian-Bennett, President

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Vicki A. Kline, Board Member

October 21, 2021

Proponent Testimony of Kellijo Jeffries PhD, MSW, LSW
Portage County Job and Family Services Director

Ohio State Representatives Gail Pavliga and Jay Edwards and members of the House Behavioral Health and Recovery Supports Committee, my name is Dr. Kellijo Jeffries and I am the director for Portage County Job and Family Services in Ravenna, Ohio. I have worked in county government for twenty-seven years and have been an adjunct instructor for Stark State College for thirteen years where I teach social work courses. Portage County Job and Family Services is a quadruple combined agency that provides Public Assistance, Child Support, employment and training support, Comprehensive Case Management for young adults, Child and Adult protective services, as well as residential care for teenagers in the custody of our agency.

Portage County Job and Family Services has legal custody of 194 children. Many of the children in our custody have been victims of significant abuse and neglect. These adverse childhood experiences include domestic violence, families going through divorce as well as trauma experiences of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Effective October 1, 2021, the new Family First Act federal legislation rolled out which emphasizes the need for residential treatment facilities to utilize trauma informed care treatment modalities.

As I sit this evening writing this letter of support for the creation of a commission focused on the research of adverse childhood experiences, I was asked to call a local emergency room to grant permission for the hospital to conduct a psychological evaluation on a child in my custody who ran out into traffic this evening because he did not want to participate in family therapy

My agency has had custody of a sixteen-year-old young man for five years. He has been unsuccessful in multiple residential treatment programs due to disruptive behaviors and physical altercations with peers and staff. To the broader society he may be viewed as a delinquent or menace to society, but he is neither, he is a victim. This child once lived in a home with his biological parents where domestic violence was prevalent, and the children witnessed the victimization of their mother. When the mother escaped the abuse, the children were left behind and this child that I speak of, became the new victim of physical abuse at the hands of his father. When this child began to act out and physically fight back, the child was no longer wanted by family and has been in my custody since he was eleven years old. He spent his sixteenth birthday in our county’s detention center and will likely emancipate from the foster care system. His life a result of traumatic adverse childhood experiences.

Mailing Address for All JFS Divisions: 449 South Meridian Street, Ravenna, Ohio 44266-1217 Agency Phone: (330) 297-3750 Administration Fax: (330) 298-1107

“An Equal Opportunity Employer”

Public Assistance
Office - 449 S Meridian St
Fax (330)297-3439

OhioMeansJobs
Office/Center - 253 S. Chestnut St
Fax (330)296-7805

Child Support
Office - 209 S. Chestnut St Suite 203
Fax (330) 297-4559

Child & Adult Protective Services
Office - 449 S. Meridian St
Fax (330)297-2258

CARES Abuse/Neglect Hotline 330-296-2273



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I decided to reference the stories of these two young men in this testimony as the trauma our children in care are dealing with is often underrecognized and understated. Sadly, there are hundreds of heartbreaking stories that can be shared relevant to adverse childhood experiences.

Creating a commission that places children at the center of further studies on adverse childhood experiences is a responsible and necessary next step in addressing the needs of children. The necessary next steps in supporting and promoting services that will aid children in making successful and healthy transitions into adulthood. Conversations that are solution focused within the commission will drive research and initiatives that will develop and enhance interventions and treatment for children that have endured trauma.

I am eager to be a support for this future commission so that elected officials, community leaders, partners and members can begin work on solutions that will improve the lives and experiences of all Ohio's children.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.