



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

House Behavioral Health Recovery and Supports Committee

Proponent testimony HB428

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Chair Carruthers, Vice Chair Pavliga, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the House Behavioral Health Recovery and Supports Committee, I am pleased to submit this written proponent testimony on behalf of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's county public children services agencies (PCSAs) that advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

PCSAO appreciates Rep. Edwards' and Rep. Pavliga's leadership in highlighting the effects that trauma has on Ohio's children and families and in bringing forward HB428 to address that trauma.

The Centers for Disease Control defines adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, as potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years), including such events as, for example:

- experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- witnessing violence in the home or community
- having a family member attempt or die by suicide

ACES also include aspects of a child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with:

- substance use problems
- mental health problems
- instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison

ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adulthood and can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential.

As KelliJo Jeffries, Director, Portage County JFS pointed out in her proponent testimony on Oct. 21, the trauma that children in custody of public children services agencies are dealing with is too often underrecognized and understated. That is why PCSAO supports HB428 and the creation of the adverse childhood experiences study commission. With focused, strong leadership, the commission can help ensure that Ohio addresses and helps reduce ACES, leading to stronger families and stronger communities.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me with any questions.