

Vinton County

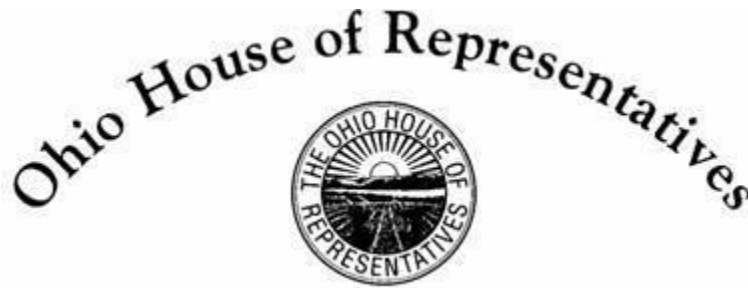
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Insurance Committee  
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## Jason Stephens State Representative

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 442.

A home assessor is an individual responsible for working in tandem with people seeking to adopt or provide foster care for a child. The home assessor completes a home study assessment for foster care and adoptive applicants, adoption amendments and updates, foster care recertification, and prefinalization adoption assessments.

Expanding the individuals qualified to perform Home Assessor duties will assist with alleviating the staff shortages many public and private child placement agencies are experiencing. Individuals with bachelor's degrees in certain related fields are more than qualified to perform the duties permitted by a Home Assessor.

In order to create parity and fairness between the "professional treatment staff" employed by private and public agencies, and in an effort to address workforce shortages, we are seeking to remove the licensure requirement for individuals employed by private agencies and require the same education requirements and employment experience as is required for individuals employed by public agencies.

Ultimately, this legislation makes two critical changes:

**1) Expands the individuals qualified to perform Home Assessor duties to assist with alleviating the staff shortages many public and private child placement agencies are experiencing.** This legislation allows individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in certain human services fields (i.e. sociology, psychology; guidance and counseling; education; religious education; business administration; criminal justice; public administration; child-care administration; nursing; family studies) to perform home assessments. Such individuals are more than qualified to perform the duties provided by a Home Assessor and this change will allow the licensed professionals to focus on providing necessary treatment and counseling as permitted by their license. There is also a shortage in the licensed professionals and those professionals need to be focused on duties related to treatment and counseling.

**2) Creates parity between the "professional treatment staff" employed by private and public agencies.** In an effort to address workforce shortages, this legislation will require the same education requirements and employment experience for staff at private agencies as is required for individuals employed by public agencies. Both private and public agencies hire "professional treatment staff" to provide rehabilitative services, home studies, clinical directions and supervise treatment of children in

specialized foster homes. These individuals work one-on-one with the treatment foster families to provide support in the foster home, but under current law, depending upon who hires the “professional treatment staff” – a public or private agency – the education and licensure requirements differ.

Both changes, the expansion of qualified individuals to perform home assessor duties and the parity of professional treatment staff amongst private and public agencies, will put Ohio in line with the requirements of surrounding states including Pennsylvania, Kentucky, West Virginia, Indiana and Michigan.

Thank you, I am happy to take any questions at this time.