



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

May 14, 2024

House Criminal Justice Committee
IP testimony on HB314
Mary Wachtel, Director of Public Policy
Public Children Services Association of Ohio
37 W. Broad Street, Suite 1100
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Chair Abrams, Vice-Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for your consideration of this interested party testimony on HB 314 from the Public Children Services Association of Ohio (PCSAO). PCSAO is a membership-driven association of Ohio's 88 county Public Children Services Agencies that advocates for sound public policy, promotes program excellence, and builds public value for safe children, stable families, and supportive communities.

The PCSAO Legislative Committee reviewed HB314, *Regards juvenile court transfer to juvenile's home county*, and believes that the bill will have impact beyond its original intent. This IP testimony is intended to provide you with that context as you consider this bill.

As we understand it, HB314 was drafted in response to a case involving a juvenile who committed a violent offense and whose sentencing was handled in their home county, rather than in the county where the offense occurred. Therefore, this bill would repeal Section 2151.271 of the Ohio Revised Code so sentencing for juvenile offenders would always take place in the county where the offense occurred.

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Our concern is that Section 2151.271 applies to **all** juvenile court proceedings, including those related to child abuse, neglect, and dependency (CAND). Therefore, repealing this section would mean that juvenile courts can no longer transfer **any** type of case, not just cases involving delinquency and unruliness.

This would have serious consequences for children and families involved with the children services system and for county public children services agencies (PCSAs) across the state. While not necessarily in high volume, CAND cases are regularly transferred among juvenile courts, for example, when families move or when an act of abuse, neglect, or dependency occurs in a county where the parents do not reside. If courts no longer have the discretion to transfer CAND cases, the PCSA with the open case and/or holding custody of the child would have no option but to keep the case rather than transferring to the PCSA in the county where the parent(s) resides. This means that the original PCSA would continue to be responsible for the continued supervision, visitation, and casework no matter the distance. And, that the child and their family would need to travel back to the original county to participate in juvenile court proceedings related to their CAND case.

A key tenet in the children services system is that decisions are made in the best interest of the child. Preserving the ability of juvenile courts to transfer cases helps ensure that courts can continue to make a best interest decision for Ohio's abused, neglected, and dependent children. Please consider this as you review this bill.

I am available to answer any questions. Thank you.