



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

Ohio House of Representatives
House Finance Committee
Testimony on Sub HB 96
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Good morning, Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this children services testimony on Sub. HB 96. My name is Mary Wachtel and I am the Director of Public Policy for 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.

I can keep my testimony short and to the point. Thank you to this Committee for maintaining the proposed new investments for public children services agencies within the Department of Children and Youth. These dollars are absolutely needed by our county public children services agencies (PCSAs) to help address the costs associated with today's placement crisis. As PCSAO, along with Jack Everson/Ross County Commissioner representing the County Commissioners Association of Ohio and Jeremy Ratcliff/Highland County JFS Director and a PCSAO member, testified before this Committee on March 11, this placement crisis can be summed up in three key points:

- Between 2020 and 2024, placement costs¹ have risen 68% (by \$158M) even as the number of kids in PCSA custody and in paid settings has declined by 9% (by 1,120)

¹ Placement costs are the expenses associated with the care and maintenance of a child in foster care. In addition to room and board, placement costs may include expenses associated with the child's special needs (such as

- Placement costs have increased across all settings and have outpaced inflation – foster homes by 29%, group homes by 64%, and residential treatment facilities by 54%.
- Counties pay nearly three-quarters of all placement costs; federal reimbursement covers the remaining one-quarter.

Sub HB96 maintains key investments and policy changes to help counties manage these escalating costs and respond to the placement crisis:

- Increased funding through the State Child Protection Allocation (SCPA) (DCY Line Item 830506)
- New language allowing the Department of Children and Youth to establish statewide rate cards in order stabilize placement costs and bring predictability to rates
- One-time investment to establish regional child wellness campuses to provide short-term treatment and care for youth with multi-system needs, and, including, thanks to your action, youth who are at risk of custody relinquishment, so they don't have to spend a night at a public children services agency.

On behalf of our members and partners, thank you to this Committee for listening, responding, and maintaining these children services priorities among many competing demands. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

increased supervision), other items such as clothing, special diets, personal incidentals, and transportation. Placement costs also include a portion of the placement setting's administrative costs. Medicaid covers most treatment and services for children in foster care.