

## Ohio Adoption Planning Group

*A Public/Private Agency Collaboration Supporting  
Best Practices in Adoption and Permanency  
Throughout Ohio*

April 7, 2011

The Honorable Dave Burke  
Chairman, Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  
Ohio House of Representatives  
77 S. High Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chairman Burke:

The Ohio Adoption Planning Group (OAPG) consists of more than 60 adoption professionals from public, private and advocacy organizations focused on adoption practice and policy issues. Some of our members are adoptive parents as well. We are writing in regard to H.B. 153.

We appreciate that the General Assembly proposed to maintain the funding for the Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy (PASSS) has remained intact. We know firsthand just how essential it is to support adoptive parents who are encountering difficult challenges and have a high need for services in order to keep their families together. While most adoptive families do not have such needs, families who have adopted traumatized children need support. We are grateful that the legislature has acknowledged and supports these families.

However, we are concerned about the reduction in state funds for Adoption Assistance from \$250 to \$230 per month. These dollars are essential for these families. Further, since public children services agencies have binding contracts with adoptive families; the agencies must honor the contracts and provide the missing \$20 per month. This estimated to cost counties \$7 million over the biennium. This change in adoption subsidy shifts yet another cost from the state to counties. Families who adopt Ohio's waiting children are the best permanency option for thousands of children in foster care. The cost of supporting these children in adoptive families pales in comparison to the costs of keeping them in "the system". We, as a state, have an obligation to support these families and thereby support the children for whom we are responsible.

We are also very concerned about the proposed cuts to child welfare. H.B. 153 cuts the state's participation in care for vulnerable children (already the lowest in the nation at 5% state investment) even further— a 10% reduction.

Ohio has many child welfare accomplishments and we should be proud of this leadership. The number of children in foster care had been significantly reduced. Parents have received evidence-based in-home interventions and foster care has been averted. There are nationally recognized model programs for engaging kin in the care of their minor relatives. Proposed cuts for state child protection funding, local governments, and the loss of personal property tax dollars threaten the continuing progress. The elimination of Kinship Incentive Program funding is especially shortsighted.

As you face many difficult decisions in this time of economic challenge, we urge you to consider Ohio's children who need the permanence an adoptive family provides. Please restore the reduction in adoption subsidy and the cuts to child welfare funding.

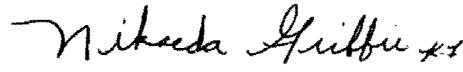
Sincerely



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