



Ohio Family Care Association

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April 4, 2011

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

Dear Chairman Burke:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Ohio Family Care Association (OFCA) which serves as the statewide voice for adoptive, foster and kinship families, to express our strong concern regarding proposed changes in H.B. 153. Specifically, we are alarmed by the proposed cuts to the adoption subsidy for families who adopt special needs children and the elimination of all funding for the Kinship Incentive Program (KIP).

We understand that Ohio is experiencing an economic crisis; however, the state has a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that children who have been permanently removed from their birth families as a result of abuse and neglect are found new permanent families. In fact, the General Assembly affirmed this obligation in 1998 when it passed legislation that said children should have permanent homes within two years of their removal from their birth family. Slashing funds to Ohio's adoption program makes a mockery of that law, and leaving kids to linger in foster care is not only cruel, it's costly.

Elimination of the Kinship Incentive Program is equally cruel and shortsighted. Not only is kinship care a far better alternative for most children than placing them with families with whom they have no relationship, but it is much less expensive. Eliminating a program that is instrumental in helping kinship families provide for the basic needs of children in their home means more kids will end up in foster care. The General Assembly has a bad habit of giving kinship families support and then yanking it away. Ten years ago, Ohio created a Kinship Navigator Program -- a program which other states have since replicated -- which provided a proven effective service to struggling relative families, and then promptly removed it. Six years ago, the KIP program was created. Now it is being targeted for elimination. At what point will our government recognize the critical role that these families play in helping Ohio's vulnerable children to succeed?

As we see it, state and county government officials remove children from their biological families because those families cannot care for them. With these cuts, you would effectively be moving these children to new families without providing them with all the tools that they need to ensure that the kids are safe and can grow to be successful. It is important to remember that belt cinching is

the responsibility of adults, not children. It is hardly fair for Ohio to exact concessions from the children whom they have legally orphaned and the adoptive and kinship families who care for them. Please reconsider these proposed cuts.

Sincerely,



Betsy Johnson, Board President

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cc: Members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee
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