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To: Chairman Chris Widener
Ranking Member Michael Skindell
Senate Finance Committee Members
From: Crystal Ward Allen, Executive Director, PCSAO
Date: June 1, 2011

On behalf of the 88 county public children services agencies, I wanted to say “THANK YOU” to this committee for your work in **restoring \$7 M/year in cuts to Adoption Assistance, additional \$1.2 M/year funds for the Kinship Permanency Incentive** program, and **\$2 M/year dedication of TANF funds to support transitioning foster youth**. These investments will go a long way toward ensuring most of Ohio’s children and youth grow up in safe, stable families. For those that age out of foster care, the transitioning funds will help improve educational and self-sufficiency outcomes.

We also appreciate the review and revised TANF Spending Plan investments for additional \$25 M/year to local JFS TANF Allocations and shifting \$7 M/year TANF MOE over to Local Child Support line 502.

The restoration of \$50 Million/year in the Local Government Fund will hopefully soften financial stresses in the 43 counties that do not have a children services levy. **PCSAO continues to seek authority to have extended timeframes for our levies**, in order to reduce the local election and campaign costs, as well as voter fatigue.

Thank you as well for the Ohio Children’s Trust Fund language amendments – these will allow wise child abuse prevention investments.

PCSAO is concerned with the elimination of the Fatherhood Commission, as engaging fathers and paternal relatives is key to our child welfare efforts to ensure every child has a safe stable home and sustaining connections. The Fatherhood Commission actively works with our Ohio Child Welfare Training Program, and is an integral part of our Child and Family Service Review Program Improvement Plan.

PCSAO continues to advocate for amendment language to exempt children and youth with oversight of the child welfare system or the department of youth services, from additional prior authorization or service utilization limitations for community based behavioral healthcare, see attached letter and amendment.

PCSAO also supports efforts to continue to fund the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation program at \$2.5 Million/year, as it served over 22,000 children in early childhood settings last year, 380 in a special Child Welfare Demonstration Project. 87% of these preschoolers were able to maintain in their classrooms and homes with the support of the ECMH program.

A comprehensive chart of issues is on the back of this sheet, thanks for your continuing support for safe children, stable families and supportive communities.