



**Senate Finance Committee**  
**Testimony on Sub. HB 50**  
**May 17, 2016**  
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Good afternoon, Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chairman Coley, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the committee. My name is Mary Wachtel, and I am legislative director of Public Children Services Association of Ohio, the membership association of the county public children services agencies (PCSAs).

PCSAO has previously testified in favor of HB 50. Our member agencies have historically served youth in foster care until they turn 18 if a permanent placement cannot be found for them. These youth tend to remain in custody at least until they finish high school, even if that happens after they turn 18. Our caseworkers continue to support the youth if they return to the agency for services when they are 19, 20, or even older.

Child welfare research tells us that these children need permanent homes with supportive families. Such permanency comes in the form of reunification, legal custody by kin, or adoption. Nevertheless, despite our best efforts, our current system simply does not have the resources to ensure such an outcome for the 850 to 1,000 youth who “age out” of foster care each year. For these reasons, we support the intent of HB50 to provide targeted services for youth until age 21 so more can transition into adulthood with solid support and positive outcomes.

However, we also remain cautious, primarily on the question of how to fund this new program. As PCSAO has shared with the legislature before, Ohio's child protective system relies on a fragile patchwork of funding to support services for abused, neglected and dependent children from birth to age 18. Local communities provide the majority of that funding (52%); federal dollars contribute 39%; state support, through the State Child Protection Allocation (SCPA) contributes 9%, putting Ohio last in the nation for state funding.

Ohio's Public Children Services Agencies (PCSAs) have experienced a 9% increase of children in care between 2011-2015, but the SCPA funding line has remained unchanged. We have to ensure that this specific allocation remains intact for the current child protection population from birth to age 18.

While PCSAO remains supportive of the concept behind HB 50—youth who transition out of foster care need these services--we would be opposed to any attempt to fund the state match for these services with existing state dollars dedicated to protecting children 0-18, such as the SCPA. We encourage you to consider adding language to HB50 stating that this new program would be implemented by ODJFS only when it is fully funded by the legislature through a new appropriation. This will help ensure that Ohio's PCSAs can continue to serve abused and neglected children ages birth to age 18 while extending services to youth who age out without permanency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.