



Safe Children, Stable Families, Supportive Communities

Ohio House of Representatives
House Finance Committee
Testimony on HB110
April 15, 2021
Angela Sausser, Executive Director
Public Children Services Association of Ohio
37 W Broad Street, Suite 1100, Columbus OH 43215
Angela@pcsao.org
614-224-5802

Good morning Chair Oelslager, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Crawley, and members of the House Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on Sub HB 110. My name is Angela Sausser, and I am the Executive Director of 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.

We appreciate this Committee's partial reinstatement of the Kinship Caregiver Program in Sub HB 110. This TANF funded program is critical to kinship families in need. We also appreciate the policy amendments regarding children services caseworker training and foster caregiver training that were added to Sub HB 110. Thank you for accepting those amendments.

I am here to ask that the House Finance Committee reconsider our primary request to **increase the State Child Protection Allocation (SCPA) within line item ODJFS 600523 by \$50 million per year**. We know this is a big ask. As we shared before this Committee and the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee, the next two years are pivotal for Ohio's county public children services agencies with significant state and federal transformation changes occurring. Implementation of the Family First Act, the newly enacted Kinship Support Program, and other key state policy initiatives offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform

how families and children are supported. We appreciate the ongoing commitment to children services and the proposed changes for transformation in HB110. However, flat funding counties at this pivotal time creates significant gaps and will lead to deeper deficits within our children services system. It is not possible to implement mandated transformation without additional resources for the county public children services agencies.

The first significant gap revolves around kinship. Children do better with family, and policy has shifted to acknowledge this. The state created a new Kinship Support Program at the end of 2020, during the lame duck session. While the executive budget includes new dollars to cover the costs of the state portion of the program, it does not include new dollars to cover the increased cost to counties. **If only half of the kinship caregivers become licensed foster parents, the estimated cost to counties will be an additional \$37M/year.** Even in a state-supervised, county-administered system, it is appropriate for the state to cover a portion of the county costs for a new program. Without new funds, county costs for this program will have to come from existing funding, making it challenging to meet current need.

Within months of the SFY 22-23 budget taking effect, Ohio will implement a transformational federal child welfare law called the Family First Act. Through dramatic funding changes, Family First puts the focus on preventing children from entering foster care and recognizes that most families can provide safe and loving care when provided with needed services in such areas as mental health, substance abuse treatment, and parenting skills. Family First provides federal funds to pay for up to half the cost of these evidence-based prevention services. State resources are needed for the ongoing match of the prevention services, and to address capacity of the services across the state so that children in every Ohio county have the same opportunity to remain with their family rather than enter foster care, regardless of local resources.

When foster care is necessary, Family First requires that children be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate for their needs. In cases where residential care

remains the best option, Family First seeks to improve the oversight of that care, and to ensure that residential facilities provide required quality, trauma-informed, clinical supports.

Family First will end federal reimbursement of placement costs for children in institutional settings that fail to meet this new standard called a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP). It is estimated that less than half of Ohio’s residential centers will meet this standard by the federal deadline of Oct. 1, 2021, and the state has given facilities a three-year extension on becoming QRTPs so to maintain current capacity. This is our second significant gap. **Our estimates show that counties will lose \$20-25 million per year in federal reimbursement due to facilities not being able to meet these new requirements by the federal deadline.** Again, without new funds, county costs for this new requirement will have to come from existing funding, making it challenging to meet current need.

The below chart details the significant gaps in children services funding within Sub HB 110. Our request for an increase of \$50 million per year in the State Child Protection Allocation (ODJFS Line 600523) is a minimum ask compared to the expected increased costs to Ohio’s county public children services agencies.

Gaps in Children Services Funding for Transformation Efforts

2022-2023 Executive Budget

| | SFY21 | SFY22 | SFY23 | Change (SFY21/23) |
|---|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------|
| GRF Allocations to Counties | \$148.2M | \$138.2M | \$138.2M | - \$10M/year |
| TANF Earmark: Kinship Caregiver Program | \$15M | \$10M | \$10M | - \$5M/year |
| Estimated Unfunded New Costs to Counties | | | | |
| Kinship Support Program | | \$37M | \$37M | - \$57M/year minimum |
| Family First Implementation | | \$25M | \$20M | |
| KGAP | | \$0 | unknown | |
| Other Policy Changes | | unknown | unknown | |
| State-Level Children Services Programs and Operations | \$31.7M | \$95.2M | \$90.7M | + \$59M |
| State-Level Initiatives | \$4.7M | \$18.8M | \$20.5M | + \$15.8M |

House Finance Committee Testimony
Angela Sausser, PCSAO
April 15, 2021

When there are sufficient resources to allow for transformation at the local level, the impact on children and families is positive. However, change, especially significant transformational change, cannot be made without sufficient funding.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the House Finance Committee address this funding gap in Sub HB110 and **provide an additional \$50 million per year to the State Child Protection Allocation found within ODJFS ALI 600523**. This funding is critical so that Ohio's county PCSAs can adequately implement the proposed transformational efforts within HB 110, including the newly established Kinship Support Program and implementation of the Family First Act. Without this new investment, county PCSAs will not be able to begin transforming the children services system and these changes will erode the stabilization efforts that are being achieved with the new investments in the SFY21-22 budget.

Amendment Request:

Amend HB110, lines 56387-56393 as follows:

*"Of the foregoing appropriation item, 600523, Family and Children Services, **not less than** ~~up to~~ **\$160,040,010** ~~\$110,040,010~~ in each fiscal year shall be provided to public children services agencies. Of that amount, \$17,600,000 in each fiscal year shall be used to provide an initial allocation of \$200,000 to each country and the remainder shall be provided using the formula in section 5101.14 of the Revised Code."*

Attached to my testimony is additional information about the current state of Ohio's children services system, the funding gaps in HB 110, Family First Act, current and proposed kinship changes, and the State Child Protection Allocation. I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.