

# Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators, Inc.



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**TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 1739**

**PRESENTED TO THE  
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

**BY**

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ASSOCIATION**

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*An Affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania*

I would like to thank Chairman Marsico and Chairman Caltagirone and members of the House Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1739. My name is Chuck Songer and I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators Association (PCYA), an affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), representing all 67 county children and youth services agencies in the Commonwealth. PCYA was founded to give the county agencies a common voice to express the needs of our clients, as well as those of agencies, in helping to shape legislation and policy in Pennsylvania. Personally, I have served in the public child welfare system in Pennsylvania as a county caseworker, supervisor and county agency administrator from 1972 to 1997, and have been the Executive Director of PCYA since 1997.

Let me begin with a personal endorsement of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) approach in handling cases of suspected abuse. Having been a caseworker in Adams County when the Child Protective Services Law came into being in 1975, I had the good fortune to be able to take advantage of this process on many occasions, and the children and families' with whom I was working received better service as a result. MDTs bring all of the relevant disciplines (education, health care, law enforcement, etc.) to the table with county child protective services to analyze and explore intervention options for cases of suspected abuse. These cases are typically complicated, multi-faceted, with no single cause or precipitating event and cross community agency boundaries. County children and youth service agencies cannot successfully address these cases alone. Child Advocacy Centers can be instrumental in facilitating the MDT approach.

House Bill 1739 seeks to enhance the MDT approach by creating a Child Abuse Multidisciplinary Response Account to support existing child advocacy centers and help to establish such centers in counties that do not currently have them. A number of counties are already benefitting from the community-based, collaborative and comprehensive approach of a children's advocacy center as they address cases of suspected child abuse. With more skilled professionals at the table, the likelihood of improved assessments, interventions and outcomes increases significantly.

In addition, the bill permits the child advocacy centers to cover cases that are beyond the scope of the county child protective services by expanding the definition of those alleged to be responsible for the abuse. This means that cases that do not meet the more restrictive definition of "perpetrator" imposed on county children and youth services agency will still be referred to the child advocacy center for analysis and planning. This bill will help to bring the MDT resources to even more agencies and families throughout the commonwealth. Our children and families deserve the best that we, as communities, have to offer.

PCYA heartily endorses House Bill 1739.