

Appreciation for Representative Sharon Ray

Thank you for:

- Representing Ohio's 66th House District, which includes most of Medina County.
- Your work on the Children and Human Services Committee.
- **Your work on bills that intersect with the safety of children and teens.**





OHIO YAB Mission

We exist to be the knowledgeable statewide voice that influences policies and practices that impact youth who have or will experience out of home care.



- Youth who run away to escape abuse
- Youth who call child abuse hotlines and are not taken seriously
- Youth who lose their lives due to lack of intervention

Why Do Youth Run Away?

- Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away each year, according to the National Runaway Safeline.
- The most common reason youth give for running away is seeking to escape a negative home environment.
- *Youth who go missing for longer periods of time, and who travel farthest away, are most likely to have been abused previously.*

What Is A Status Offense?

- A status offense is a noncriminal act that is considered a law violation only because of a youth's status as a minor. One such act is running away.
- **In Ohio, status offenses are classified as “unruly children” – and there is no lower age specified for an “unruly child.”** This means that a child as young as 10 who runs away to seek to escape an abusive situation could be charged with a status offense for doing so.
- In addition, if the young person runs away again, the court can punish the youth with a term of secure confinement. These instances of secure confinement do nothing to help youth and can, in fact, make it more likely that young person engages in delinquent behavior in the future.

Risks for Runaways

- Runaways are in a difficult situation – it isn't safe for them on the street, but it might not be safe for them to return home either.
- The current punitive response makes youth fear authorities, rather than going to them for help.
- While on the run, youth are at risk of violence and human trafficking.



LSC Language

- LSC language that was crafted with input from current and former foster youth
- Comparison of current and proposed wording focusing on three sections; two of which that have not been updated since 2017.
- In 2019, HB 137 passed, making Ohio police officers mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect.

Police and Mandated Reporting

- HB 137, as proposed by Representative Bernadette Kennedy was signed into law on March 20, 2019. This bill amended Section 2151.42 of the Ohio Revised Code to make municipal and county police officers mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect.
- Prior to this legislative victory, Ohio was the only state in the nation that didn't include police officers on its list of mandated reporters.



Abused Youth and Cross-Reporting

- A follow-up bill, House Bill 4 was proposed in March 2021, three years after House Bill 137 passed; to take the next step forward by requiring cross reporting from public children services and law enforcement in order to prevent child abuse cases from falling through the cracks.
- The bill passed, but as the recent example of Martonio demonstrates, there are still children and teens in the state of Ohio whose abuse is falling between the cracks. We've made a list of other youth who have lost their lives as well.



House Bill 346



- Would require mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect to report to both a peace officer and the public children services agency.

House Bill 635

- Would enact the Child Protection Reform Act.
- We care and understand that this bill was created in response to the loss of a child's life.
- We definitely want to improve safety protocols.
- We read over the bill, and have some questions, regarding how exactly this bill differs from business as usual.

