

Health and Human Services Sub-Committee of the House Finance Committee  
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Chairman Hoops, members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of the House Finance Committee, my name is Gayle Channing Tenenbaum. You know me as the Legislative Director of the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, and Co-Chair of the Campaign to Protect Ohio's Future, but today I am here to talk about ABC or the Access to Better Care Initiative. For the past 18 months I have had the honor of working with cabinet members of the Taft Administration, including Director Mike Hogan who you heard from earlier; the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities, Family and Children First Councils the Center for Innovative Practice; and Ohio families, to create the ABC Initiative.

I want to give you a brief overview of how ABC came to be a part of Governor Taft's proposed budget, before I tell you why it is so important to Ohioans that this Initiative is implemented. In order to make ABC a reality, the dedicated individuals of the ABC Workgroup have worked since September 2003 to conduct new research and focus groups; gather and evaluate the latest data about evidenced based practice, successful programs and the needs of Ohioans; held countless meetings, including 62 meetings in Ohio communities, and dedicated time to workgroups that included over 150 professionals, family members, and advocates.

Although we began our work because of the need to provide evidenced based community *treatment* services, we recognized that we also needed to focus on prevention and early intervention, in addition to treatment. In recognition of the need for a "continuum of care" that includes prevention, intervention and treatment, funding for ABC is being provided across cabinet departments.

Now that I have told you about the in depth process the ABC Workgroup utilized to ensure that our recommendations were solid and necessary for the state of Ohio, I want to tell you a story about a little girl who could have benefited very much from their implementation. This little girl was a three year old when, for some reason, her mother took her to the Children's (where?) home and left her there. The little girl spent time in foster care before she was adopted by a couple. The adoptive mother was one of 13 children who had been removed from her birth family because of abuse and was raised in 13 foster homes. The mother never had a doll when she was a little girl. She was also often abused in the foster homes or work farms where she was sent. She had no idea how to be a mother. The adoptive father was the only child of two alcoholic parents and as an adult suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. He heard voices telling him to do things to his daughter.

The abuse of the little girl began early in life and continued until her sophomore year in college. The child was subjected to physical, emotional and sexual abuse. We know now that young children, as a result of exposure to abuse and neglect or domestic violence,

actually have a change in the make up of their brain. If appropriate treatment is not received when the child is young, she will grow up to suffer many problems. This little girl suffered from chronic depression, dissociating behaviors, such as seeing people or a person in the room that no one else sees, and flashbacks as a result of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This little girl's suffering was not recognized and treated by an early mental health specialist in a child care setting, not seen by a care team in her high school setting, and she never received the treatment she needed so badly.

What happened to the little girl? As an adult she was hospitalized four times with severe depression and dissociative episodes. She was 40 years old before a psychiatrist recognized what had happened to this woman as a child and began treating her PTSD. As an adult she was also given medication that controlled the depression, flashbacks, and dissociative episodes. Because of the treatment the woman finally received as an adult and the miracle of drugs that can treat disorders of the brain she was able to function well as a wife, mother and child advocate. But her determination that other children not suffer the dark days she has experienced make her determined to see the proposals in the ABC Initiative are funded so other children will receive the treatment they need as children.

The adoptive mother of this little girl died recently. It was a very difficult time for the grown up adopted daughter as she tried to care for the mother who had never been able to protect or care for her. At the end of her life, the woman's mother began talking to the "little girl" that her daughter would see when she had dissociative episodes.

This part of my story brings me to another very important point about the Governor's budget, the proposal to eliminate Disability Medical Assistance. This intense emotional experience of her mother's death caused the daughter to have serious flashbacks and to become very depressed. The medications she took needed to be changed; the new medications caused serious side effects and had to be changed again. The woman was not able to work and function again until the right combination was found. I am appalled at the proposal to eliminate Disability Medical Assistance because many people receiving medications through the DMA program are mentally ill and taking psychotropic drugs. You simply cannot take these drugs away from people. The brain is a very delicate organ. Finding the correct medication for depression, bi-polar disorder, and schizophrenia can take months and then is essential that the person be able to continue to receive the drugs so that they can come out of very dark and sometimes violent times.

That little girl, as a grown up stands before you today, and asks that you support the funding in the Governor's Budget for ABC so that hundreds of other children will not know the horror and darkness I experienced as a child but also continue to struggle with as an adult due to lack of treatment when I was a child and teenager. I also hope that you will give serious consideration to funding the DA Medical program so that persons needing their very brain specific medications continue to receive the care they need. I had the best doctors possible working with me and it took three weeks in January for them to straighten out my medications. Please do not subject others to the horrors that they will suffer if they no longer have their medications. I know most of you well as members of this subcommittee and some of us have been friends for a long time. I also

know that kind of people you are and believe that you will hear these concerns and find ways to address them in this budget process.

Thank you and I would be glad to answer any questions.