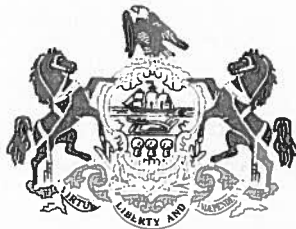


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House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

June 7, 2011

COMMITTEES

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE,
MAJORITY CHAIR

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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TO: All House Members

SUBJECT: Providing Funding of Child Advocacy Centers

FROM: Representative Julie Harhart *JH*

A children's advocacy center is the focal point for the delivery of medical care and mental health treatment to child victims of physical and sexual abuse. A "one-stop-shop" for the tiniest victims of crime, a children's advocacy center brings together doctors, nurses, prosecutors, social workers, and police in order to provide a unique and essential program treatment and healing. The center gives these wounded children the best chance to recover and also provides the most effective way to bring perpetrators to justice. The center utilizes techniques which not only minimize the trauma of children who must tell a heartbreaking story of abuse, but also employs strategies to increase the odds of gaining convictions.

Child abuse has reached epidemic proportions. According to Childhelp, a national organization which provides the National Child Abuse Hotline, over three million reports of child abuse are made every year in the United State. Approximately five children a day die as a result of abuse. More than three out of four of those children are under the age of four. Ninety percent of the victims of child sexual abuse know their perpetrator. Sixty-eight percent are molested by family members.

According to the Northeast Regional Children's Advocacy Center, there are currently 20 children's advocacy centers in the Commonwealth. The purpose of my legislation is to provide additional resources to the 20 centers which currently exist in Pennsylvania and to help counties which do not currently have such centers establish them.

The Children's Advocacy Center Funding Act, which I am reintroducing again this session, would place an additional \$2 fee on criminal defendants in this Commonwealth, as well as on all initial filings in the Supreme Court of

Pennsylvania, the Superior Court of Pennsylvania, and the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania for which a fee is now authorized.

Applicants would be selected based upon criteria prepared by the district attorney of the county. In order to receive a grant, the applicant must be endorsed by the district attorney and the multidisciplinary team established to investigate cases of child abuse under the Child Protective Services Law.

Currently, there is no statutory funding stream for the children's advocacy centers. Typically, these centers receive funding from charitable organizations, private gifts, and sponsoring institutions. My legislation would change that.

If you care to join me as a co-sponsor of this bill, please contact Michele Warren at 772-5398 or at mwarren@pahousegop.com.

JH/mmgw