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House of Representatives
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Harrisburg

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 8, 2012
SUBJECT: Co-sponsor Request – Family Conferencing
TO: All House Members
FROM: Representative Dan Moul

I am preparing to introduce legislation that will amend the Public Welfare Code to require counties to implement family conferencing, so that families - not government agencies - can take the lead in creating plans to address concerns for a child's welfare.

In many cases, solutions to concerns for a child's safety, permanency, and well-being are dictated by government caseworkers. Family conferencing provides an avenue for families to find their own solutions. At a family conference, which is a meeting facilitated by a Children and Youth Agency, a family gathers to create a service plan that addresses the concerns that caused the family to become involved in the child welfare system. Although family conferencing is not always successful, a great number of those who have utilized it can find more effective and less costly ways to remedy concerns for a child.

In order to give families involved with Children and Youth Agencies an opportunity to create a service plans for a child, my legislation would require counties to institute family conferencing within 5 years (DPW would be responsible for phasing-in the requirement and preparing counties to comply). The Children and Youth Agency would be responsible for inviting family members and preparing them to participate in the family conference. When a family develops a service plan, it must be approved by the Children and Youth Agency or a court to take effect, and the Children and Youth Agency is responsible for supporting the implementation of the service plan.

I hope that you will join me by cosponsoring this legislation. If you would like to do so, please contact Suzette Beemer at sbeemer@pahousegop.com.