

Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators, Inc.



April 24, 2014

The Honorable Kathy Watson
Chair, House Children and Youth Committee
P.O. Box 202144
B16 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2144

The Honorable Louise Bishop
Chair, House Children and Youth Committee
P.O. Box 202192
326 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2192

Dear Chair Watson and Chair Bishop:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators (PCYA), an affiliate of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, I write to share our comments and questions regarding Senate Bill 27, requiring additional exchange of information between county agencies and licensed medical practitioners.

While we applaud both the Senate and House Children and Youth Committees' work on addressing child safety and abuse, SB 27 may require clarification regarding the role of county agencies. County agencies already collaborate with medical professionals for the shared goal related to a child's health and well-being. If there is cause to contact a child's primary care physician during the life of a child abuse case, the agency does so.

Subsection C of SB 27 discusses information that county agencies must provide at the request of a child's medical provider. Subsection D requires county agencies to send a letter to a child's physician each time there is an investigation or assessment, another letter with the results of the assessment and a copy of the family service plan for each child with an active case. Additionally, this section requires the county children and youth agency to notify a child's primary care physician and any other licensed medical practitioner providing care to the child at the initiation of a case, and again of the final status of a case. If the intent is for the above information required under subsection D to be provided in every case, whether requested by the medical provider or not, administrative burdens for county agencies will significantly increase.

Senate Bill 27 would also compound the issue of expungement if a report is unfounded. Recent changes to the Child Protection Safety Laws will require the Department of Public Welfare, beginning December 31, 2014 to notify parties of expungements. However, all licensed medical practitioners involved are not considered "parties" and the county agency would pick up that additional

responsibility under SB 27. Counties are concerned about the additional task of notifying all practitioners involved of the need to expunge information from their records, and question how children and youth agencies can be sure that unfounded reports are expunged from medical records.

Counties are also concerned with requirements for children and youth agencies to provide the child's family care physician and all other medical practitioners treating the child with a service plan for the child and the child's family. Family service plans are goals determined appropriate for a family by a county agency, and unless specifically requested by a physician, should not be included in a child's medical records. Many counties have never had a physician request a family service plan, as their focus is appropriately placed on the immediate health of a child. Finally, PCYA suggest an amendment to the legislation's effective date, as retroactivity would make physicians and agencies uncompliant.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brinda Carroll Penyak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brinda" being the most prominent part.

Brinda Carroll Penyak
Acting Executive Director

cc: Greg Grasa, Executive Director, House Children and Youth Committee
Roseann Cadau, Executive Director, House Children and Youth Committee