

House Children and Seniors Committee
Friday, February 19, 2021

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the Committee I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill No. 2371. My name is Diann Gambill and I serve families within Crawford County whom are participating in The Family Response Advocate Program. This program is derived from a collaborative effort between Pittsburg Police Department, The City of Pittsburg and The Family Resource Center and is also housed within the Pittsburg Police Department. The Family Response Advocate Program thrives on referrals from law enforcement officials, schools, and other community partners. The goal of The Program is to wrap families in local services and/or programs through intense collaboration. This empowers our consumers to create a positive family dynamic which aids success in every aspect of their lives.

As a Family Response Advocate, I have the pleasure of working with a diverse population of consumers in both circumstance and need. One predominantly pressing need is proper nutrition that adequately supports healthy development. The lack of ability to provide proper nutrition assists in creating a high risk environment littered with stressors. When a caregiver is presented with the choice between paying bills and obtaining groceries, most often nutrition ranks as a lesser priority. The SNAP and child care subsidy would assist in alleviating these hard choices our families are currently facing. In years past, I have witnessed consumers opt not to apply for food assistance, due to not wanting the abuser or perpetrator to be invited back into their lives. This not only creates a deficit within their homes but also within our communities as a whole.

One family that comes to mind fell victim to this, having to apply for child support from her abuser in order to benefit from food assistance. This 26-year-old single mom is providing care for her eight-month old son on one income. Her current employment is in care of the elderly. This was also her field of employment while still pregnant, wherein she performed her duties so much as her body allowed. Within this timeframe her hours were decreased, inadvertently affecting her income. After giving birth she chose to breast feed her newly born son. Whilst not being properly nourished herself, this also creates delayed development in the child. In this instance, Mom is unable to provide the needed vitamins and minerals through her milk for her son. The Family Response Advocate Program financially assisted with this mom's utilities, rent and food for one month's time. Though The Program encouraged mom to apply for SNAP benefits, the mother declined. This mom reported that she was abused and had been raped by her prior boyfriend, who also fathered her son. She denied the suggestion of receiving food assistance because she didn't want him to be contacted for child support in fear that this may lead to his coming back after her and her son.

Just like this mother, every qualifying caregiver should be able to benefit from food services such as the SNAP program without fears of being unsafe. As we all know, food and proper nutrition are imperative for community sustenance and growth. This invites age-appropriate development, which in turn creates a healthy future for our children and communities overall. The House Bill No. 2317 has the Family Response Advocate Program's full support.

Sincerely,


S. Diann Gambill

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