

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 3691

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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Hearing Date: April 6, 2021 8:00 AM

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HollyAnn Petree

ADDY'S HOPE

Decatur, TX

As a former foster parent, adoptive parent, and now adoption professional, I find myself again pleading with you as those in power to make changes for our children. I commend your recognition that more must be done to improve outcomes for children as section 3 of this bill requires an independent entity to assess outcomes. I expressed my reservations about CBC before this same Committee in 2016. I have now lived my fears realized as I have seen outcomes falsely represented by the ones reporting the outcomes.

As an adopt only agency director, I have personal experience with 4 of the SSCCs in existence. I contracted with OCOK for 12 months. I found their staff to be ill equipped at best from the business operations all they way to case managers. There was confusion on who was responsible for what tasks and moving a child through the adoption process with them in charge of the case proved near futile for any organization with a high standard of service to children. Despite placing 10 higher needs/older children in OCOK care in the 12 months I was contracted with them, I could not continue to accept children from this catchment area into our amazing adoptive homes. I could not lower my standard of placement to what the operations of OCOK provided in placement operations. Adding on to that was the fact that twice we were not paid by OCOK according to our contract. It took almost a year to receive one of our payments. I also contracted with 2Ingage on a case by case bases. It took 7 months to receive payment for one of our placements through them. We are also hesitant to take children from this catchment area due to a most recent case where despite involving staff from the top down, we were unable to effectively work a service plan for a child due to constant miscommunication or lack of communication within the organization. The time it takes to manage a case with 2Ingage far exceeds the time it takes to manage a case with DFPS, and the reimbursement rate is less for an adoption only agency. It is my experience that the entities being awarded the SSCC contracts do not have the capacity to complete the work assigned to them. Despite the clear warning signs of inability to operate at standards sufficient to provide safety to children and families, we continue to push roll out and place more demands on these already teetering systems as the most recent reports show.

I applaud the efforts of this bill to involve local stakeholders in the implementation. Our community of stakeholders in Region 9 reached out to DFPS leadership in regard to the impending CBC in our area with no response. This cannot continue if we are to call this program "Community" based care. Without community, it is simply contract based care which simply goes to the highest bidder and makes our children commodities.

I am happy to provide documentation of my experience to any Committee Member interested in the true impact of legislation on children waiting to be adopted.