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Attorney at Law

March 5, 2025

Re: HB 2614 Amendments Regarding Consortia

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Chotzen, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

I am a member of the Juvenile Advocacy Collective (“JAC”), the consortia that represents parents and children in dependency and delinquency proceedings in Marion County. I am writing to urge you to amend HB 2614 to remove the sunset date for public defense consortia, or alternatively to extend the sunset for a much longer period to allow for further analysis.

I joined JAC in October 2020 after previously working as a deputy district attorney and at a private law firm. I was motivated by the opportunity to represent youth and parents in crisis while having the flexibility of running my own office and practicing with a group of experienced, collegial lawyers. Upon starting with JAC, I was provided with mentorship and significant training, slowly building my caseload over time under the supervision of our board. I continue to stay abreast of developments in the law through regular multi-day trainings specific to juvenile law and weekly meetings with the other attorneys in our consortia.

The work that I do includes regularly visiting teenagers in juvenile detention, talking with children who have experienced abuse and neglect in foster homes, and advocating in court for parents who have had their children removed from their care. It is simultaneously emotionally taxing and highly rewarding. However, if the sunset on consortia is extended rather than eliminated, I am one of many attorneys likely to turn to private practice. Not knowing whether my position will exist in two years is destabilizing. While I love this work deeply, the administrative burden of contracting with OPDC as an individual provider is a significant deterrent.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

/s/ Elizabeth Meuse

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