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NATIONAL PARENTS ORGANIZATION
Preserving the Bond Between Parents and Children

National Parents Organization
Response to SB 125

National Parents Organization (NPO) advocates for children's true best interests after parental separation or divorce. We are reforming the family courts to treat fathers and mothers as equally important to the well-being of their children, to make shared parenting after separation or divorce the norm, and to arrange finances after separation or divorce equitably. Child support laws and policies are extremely important to each of NPO's goals.

The Ohio Senate is now considering Senate Bill 125, sponsored by Senator Beagle and co-sponsored by Senators Eklund, Hite, Manning, Terhar, and Wilson. This bill would result in dramatic changes to Ohio child support law. The changes would include, *inter alia*: updating and incorporating in the Ohio Revised Code the methodology for establishing the basic child support schedule; shifting responsibility for creating and updating the basic child support schedule and creating the child support worksheet to the Department of Job and Family Services; adopting, for the first time, a standard parenting time adjustment; adding greater guidance for courts concerning deviations for extended parenting time, and creating a self-sufficiency reserve that is based on the obligor's income.

Many of these changes are welcome—indeed, many are long overdue. There has not been a significant overhaul of Ohio's support laws for a quarter of a century now. That has not been for lack of effort on the part of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The fact that it has proven so difficult to get significant legislation on this issue through the legislature indicates why it is so important to get it right this time. And, while there is much that SB 125 gets right, there are also some serious errors and some sorely missed opportunities to improve Ohio's child support laws even more.

Self-Sufficiency Reserve

NPO has long advocated for a fair and appropriate self-sufficiency reserve (SSR) to ensure that low-income child support obligors are not subjected to child support orders that are impossible for them to comply with. While it might initially seem that higher child support levels are always in the best interest of children, experience has shown the errors of this line of thought. Unreasonable child support orders do not result in more financial resources for children; they result in less, as those subject to them are faced with sanctions that make it even more difficult to meet the obligation and often resort to operating in an underground economy, frequently being even less involved with their children.

National Parents Organization has long made this argument and, more recently, both the Federal Office of Child Support and the Ohio Office of Child Support have come to recognize this. Federal regulations require an SSR and SB 125 proposes a reasonable approach to meeting this requirement.

In particular, we laud the decision to avoid cliff effects and perverse incentives by instituting a sliding scale minimum order. Cliff effects always result in cases that are very similar being treated in very different ways and typically create undesirable incentives to remain on one side or the other of the "cliff."

Standard Parenting Time Adjustment

The institution of a fair and appropriate parenting time adjustment directly affects the feasibility of parents sharing in the responsibility for raising their children. As such, it is a primary concern of NPO when evaluating child support guidelines. According to the latest report from the National Conference of State Legislatures, "[a]pproximately 36 states and D.C. have an adjustment in the child support guidelines for parenting time."[1] Despite repeated recommendations from Child Support Guidelines Advisory Councils, Ohio's child support guidelines have never included a parenting time adjustment. Thus, guideline child support calculations have placed 100% of the child support funds in the obligee's household despite the fact that standard parenting time plans place the children in the obligor's household between 20% and 35% of the time.

NPO strongly favors the approach to a parenting time adjustment that is gradual, avoiding the cliff effects that exacerbate legal conflicts and result in unjustified disparate treatment of cases. Arizona[2] and Michigan[3] are examples of states that do this well. Using this approach would avoid the problems we note below with the method for recognizing the direct child expenses of the obligor that is proposed in SB 125.

The *2017 Child Support Guidelines Review Report to the General Assembly* (henceforth, '*2017 Report*') recommends that an adjustment for "standard parenting time" be incorporated into the guideline child support calculations. While NPO supports the recognition of an obligor's direct expenses on children with an incorporated parenting time adjustment, as opposed to relying only on (underused) deviation factors, there are a number of problems—some quite serious—with the parenting time adjustment proposed in the *2017 Report* and the implementation of these recommendations in SB 125.

- ***Fictional Averages:*** First, in Ohio, recognizing the direct expenses of obligors based on "standard parenting time" involves a fiction because there is no statewide standard parenting time for non-residential parents. Default parenting time schedules are set at the county level by the juvenile and domestic relations courts. "Standard parenting time" varies

[1] See "Child Support and Parenting Time Orders," *National Conference of State Legislatures*, http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/child-support-and-parenting-time-orders.aspx, visited 4/27/2017.
[2] Arizona does this with tables. See "Arizona Child Support Guidelines", https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/2015CSGuidelinesRED.pdf, visited 4/27/2017.
[3] Michigan employs a formula to calculate the parenting time offset. See "2013 Michigan Child Support Formula Manual," http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/Resources/Documents/Publications/Manuals/focb/2013MCSF.pdf, visited 4/27/2017.

rather widely from county to county.[4] The *2017 Report* proposes assuming that 30% of the child(ren)'s time is spent in the household of the obligor. That seems like a reasonable assumption *if* one is committed to pretending the existence of a uniformity that does not, in fact, exist. However, some obligors' direct financial contributions to their children will be over-estimated by this, and some will be underestimated. We note that this problem would not arise if Ohio were to adopt an approach similar to that of Arizona's or Michigan's. These base the guideline calculation on the parenting time that is provided in the individual couple's situation rather than relying on an assumed and fictional average.

- ***Cliff Effect:*** Second, the approach to recognizing the expenses of obligors exercising "standard parenting time" introduces a cliff effect into the calculation of guideline child support. An obligor parent who has the child(ren) for 89 overnights is not entitled to the parenting time adjustment, one who has the child(ren) just one more night, receives the standard parenting time adjustment. Like all cliff effects, this one will result in perverse incentives to engage in needless disputes over insignificant differences in time. Furthermore, like the last problem, this one would not arise if Ohio were to adopt a methodology similar to Arizona's or Michigan's.

- ***Flawed Methodology:*** Third, the methodology for calculating a standard parenting time adjustment is flawed. This flaw has been present in recommendations from the Department of Job and Family Services since the 2005 report from the Guidelines Council. The flaw is that of treating the child-related expenses of the two parents in radically unequal ways. To explain why the methodology is flawed, it's necessary first to sketch the methodology.

  The method used to arrive at what is now proposed to be a 10% downward parenting time adjustment for those exercising "standard parenting time" is as follows.

  - Choose an amount of time to treat as the standard parenting time of the obligor. The *2017 Report's* recommendation assumes that the child(ren) are with the obligor parent 30% of the time.
  - Then, estimate the percentage of the child support costs that "travel with the child(ren)," which are called 'variable costs'. The *2017 Report's* recommendation, like those in previous years, assumes this to be 35%.
  - Multiplying these two numbers, you get 10.5%, which the *2017 Report* apparently simply rounds down to 10%.

  Here's why this methodology is flawed. It treats *all* of the direct child-related expense of one parent, the obligee, as if they are a shared responsibility between the two parents. And it treats the direct child-related expenses of the other parent, the obligor, as if they are a shared responsibility *only to the degree that they actually reduce the expenses of the obligee*. So, the extra room(s), beds, clothes, and so forth that the obligor provides for the child(ren) when they are with the obligor are considered the *sole* financial responsibility of

[4] Local Rule 27 in Franklin County, to give just one example, has four parenting time options. One of these is divides the children's time exactly equally between the parents and another of which divides the children's time close to equally between the two parents.

the obligor. While the extra room(s), bed, clothes that the obligee provides for the child(ren) are considered *shared* expenses and divided between the parents based on their share of the combined child support obligation.

This methodology would be a clear signal that the state of Ohio considers only *one* parent to be the *real* parent of the children and the other parent is put in a subsidiary, helper role. NPO strongly believes that, when the financial situation of the parents allows for the child(ren) to have two homes, *all* of the expenses to provide those two homes are a *shared* parental responsibility. Neither parent's child-related expenses take priority over the others. Decades of research have shown that, in most cases, when parents live apart, children benefit when the parents share day-to-day care for the children. Providing that benefit is the responsibility of *both* parents, in proportion to their ability to do so.

- ***Mathematical Error:*** Finally, SB 125 ***does not*** follow the recommendation laid out in the *2017 Report*. Instead, SB 125 repeats a mathematical error that was introduced in the 2005 *Ohio's Child Support Guidelines Council Report*. That report employed the basic methodology that has been the basis of the recommendations from the Department of Job and Family Services since then, which was outlined in the previous bullet point. Unfortunately, the 2005 report also included a mathematical error. It calculated the downward deviation in the obligor's child support from *the obligor's obligation only*, instead of from the *combined child support obligation*. That this was a mathematical error is *uncontestable* given the methodology that was stated.

  The error was corrected in the 2009 and the 2013 reports. The 2013 report, for example, clearly states that the downward adjustment is to be calculated as a percentage "of the *combined* annual support obligation when a standard parenting time order has been issued by a court" (p. 14, emphasis added). The *2017 Report* repeats this assertion saying,

  > "The 2013 Guidelines review recommended that the worksheet include an adjustment of 10% of the *combined* annual support obligation when a standard parenting time order has been issued by a court. This 10% credit was included in SB 262 and the Department retains the recommendation here" (p. 15, emphasis added).

  Nevertheless, SB 125 relapses to the mathematical error that was introduced by the 2005 report. §3119.051(A) states:

  > "Except as otherwise provided in this section, a court or child support enforcement agency calculating the amount to be paid under a child support order shall reduce by ten per cent the amount of the annual *individual* support obligation for the parent or parents when a court has issued or is issuing a court-ordered parenting time order that equals or exceeds ninety overnights per year" (lines 1342-1348, emphasis added).

  Quite apart from the philosophical and methodological objections NPO raises to the proposed standard parenting time adjustment in SB 125, this is simply an *egregious mathematical error*. Enacting it into law when this is known would be unconscionable, and an embarrassment to the Ohio legislature.

In addition to the methodological and mathematical flaws in how the standard parenting time adjustment is calculated, SB 125 contains provisions related to the standard parenting time adjustment that are problematic and some of which are based on what can only be described as suspicion and mistrust of parents.

For example, §3119.051(B) provides that:

> "At the request of the obligee, a court may eliminate a previously granted adjustment established under division (A) of this section if the obligor, without just cause, has failed to exercise court-ordered parenting time" (lines 1350-1353).

Which raises several concerns:

- ***Evidential Requirement:*** §3119.051(B) provides no evidential requirement on the court nor does it provide any requirement that the obligor be notified of this request or have an opportunity to respond to it. These are minimal requirements of procedural due process.
- ***Absence of an Appropriate Baseline:*** §3119.051(B) assumes that any case in which an obligor is, without just cause, not exercising court-ordered parenting time, is a case in which that parent doesn't exercise parenting time in excess of the threshold that SB 125 sets up: ninety overnights per year (§3119.051(A)). But this is not true. Court-ordered parenting time could be, for example, 140 overnights. If an obligor parent is exercising just 120 of the 140 court-ordered overnights and failing, without just cause, to exercise the other 20 overnights, §3119.051(B) allows a court to remove the 10% parenting time adjustment even though that parent is exercising parenting time far in excess of the amount on which the adjustment is based. This oversight could be easily fixed by replacing 'has failed to exercise court-ordered parenting time' with 'has failed to exercise at least 90 overnights of parenting time'.
- ***Asymmetry of Parental Treatment:*** §3119.051(B) provides that only one parent—the obligee—can request an adjustment because the actual parenting time is not reflecting the parenting time order. There is no provision for an obligor parent who is, in fact, exercising parenting time in excess of the court ordered parenting time, to make a similar request of the court. So, imagine that an obligor parent begins by spending the court-ordered time with the child(ren) but it is less time than the 90 overnight threshold created by SB 125. Then, the obligee parent chooses to leave the child(ren) with the obligor for significantly more overnights on an extended basis and the obligor has the child(ren) for, say, 120 overnights on an ongoing basis. This obligor parents has no recourse similar to the obligee's to request that the court institute the 10% adjustment in light of the changed circumstances. It is difficult to understand this asymmetry as being based on anything except the assumption that obligee parents are to be trusted and respected and obligor parents are to be treated with suspicion.

Guidelines for Deviation for Extended Parenting Time

Following the recommendations of the *2017 Report*, SB 125 would strengthen the deviation factor for extended parenting time to reflect the increasing frequency of equal or nearly equal parenting time arrangements. The manner in which it would handle these cases is inadequate and likely to

create a barrier to the practice of equal or nearly equal shared parenting—a practice that social science research has shown to be best for children in most cases. Again, the problems raised by the handling of what SB 125 considers "extended parenting time" would be avoided with the adoption of a model of dealing with parenting time adjustments like that employed in Arizona or Michigan.

SB 125 handles extended parenting time cases by creating a presumption of a substantial downward deviation for cases where the obligor has the children at least 147 overnights per year. (This is approximately 40.4% of the year.) SB 125 provides that:

> "If court-ordered parenting time is equal to or exceeds one hundred forty-seven overnights per year, the court shall consider a substantial deviation. If the court does not grant a substantial deviation from that amount, it shall specify in the order the facts that are the basis for the court's decision" (lines 1489-1493).

There are several problems with this way of handling nearly equal parenting time cases:

- ***Vagueness:*** There is no definition of 'substantial deviation'. This will lead to differential treatment of similar cases as one court might consider a downward deviation of 10% "substantial" and another might not consider a deviation substantial unless it is, say, 40% to reflect the 40% time that parent has with the children. This problem does not arise with an approach like Arizona's or Michigan's.
- ***Improper Implied Basis of Calculation:*** As is recognized by the recent legislative recommendations from Job and Family Services (but not the actual wording of SB 125), parenting time adjustments have to do with the division of the *combined* child support obligation. This deviation factor approach to dealing with extended parenting time invites the court to look at this in terms of a deviation based on only the *obligor's* obligation.
- To illustrate how this is likely to mislead, consider this example. Suppose the Obligor and Obligee each earn $50,100 per year and have two children subject to the child support order. Their combined annual child support obligation under the new tables would be $17,631; each would have an obligation of $8,815.50 per year. Now, suppose that Obligor has the children 164 overnights per year (45% of the overnights). Applying the standard parenting time adjustment, as specified in SB 125, the Obligor's guideline child support obligation would be $7,933.95.[5]

  A court is required to consider a "substantial deviation" in Obligor's obligation and explain any decision not to grant it. But the court will be looking only at *Obligor's* obligation and thinking only about what counts as a substantial downward deviation from this. Presumably, any court would consider a 45% downward deviation to be a substantial

[5] Were the standard parenting time adjustment calculated in the mathematically correct way (pp. 4-5, above), Obligor's guideline child support obligation would be $7,052.40.

downward deviation. Applying this deviation would result in an annual child support transfer payment[6] from Obligor to Obligee of $4,363.67.[7]

However, this is not the proper way to think about the division of the two parents' child support obligation. To see why not, simply imagine that this same reasoning were employed to handle the case where obligor had the children 50% of the time. In this case, the reasoning of the court would lead to a 50% downward deviation in Obligor's obligation, resulting in an annual child support transfer payment from Obligor to Obligee of $3,966.97.[8]

The paradoxical and unacceptable effect of this methodology is that, in a case where the parents have equal incomes and the children were spending equal time with each parent (and there are no other factors that are presumed to be unequal), the child support funds available to Obligee would be $12,782.48, while the child support funds available to Obligor would be $4,848.52. This methodology would put 72.5% of the combined child support funds in one parent's household without there being any difference in the expected expenses on the children in the two households.[9]

Again, we note that the approaches employed by Arizona and Michigan avoid this problem. They, properly, look at the combined funds that should be available for the benefit of the children and apportion those funds between the two households based on the expected child-related expenses in each household.

- ***Cliff Effect:*** We often hear courts complain that we should not set up a child support system where parents trade "days for dollars" or "kids for cash." These are catchy phrases. But, of course, the whole point of child support is to ensure that the funds to support the children are in the household where the expenses arise. In order to achieve this goal, when children split their time between two households, the combined child support obligation must be split between the households.

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[6] We speak here of the *child support transfer payment* instead of the child support obligation because, of course, the each parent's portion of the initial combined child support obligation is that parent's child support obligation. The adjustments are made to determine how much of this obligation should be transferred to the other parent to reflect expenses in that other parent's household. This is obvious when one considers that obligees, too, have child support obligations. It is just that, pursuant to ORC §3119.07, this obligation is "presumed to be spent on that child and shall not become part of a child support order." So, 'child support obligation' refers not to the amount that a parent transfers to the other parent but to the parent's share of the combined child support obligation.

[7] Again, we present, in this footnote, the result that would obtain if the standard parenting time adjustment were calculated in the mathematically correct way (pp. 4-5, above). In this case, the 45% deviation would result in an annual child support order for the obligor of $3,878.82.

[8] Were the standard parenting time adjustment calculated properly instead of how SB 125 requires, the result would be an annual child support transfer payment of $3,526.20.

[9] And, finally, were the standard parenting time adjustment calculated in the mathematically proper way instead of how SB 125 provides, the child support funds available to Obligee would be $12,341.70; those available to Obligor would be $5,289.30; and the methodology would put 70% of the child support funds in one household despite the parents having equal incomes and there being an expectation of equal expenditures on the children in the two households.

To avoid contention and litigation over parenting time that is actually motivated by financial concerns, it is vital to avoid cliff effects. If the parenting time adjustment is gradual, there will be little incentive to trade dollars for days. But, if the method of calculating child support creates cliff effects, there will be needless and destructive battles over meaningless differences in time with the children.

SB 125 creates a cliff effect for what it considers extended parenting time. Consider two sets of parents, the Smiths and the Joneses. The two families' situations are identical except that the Smiths have a parenting time schedule under which the obligor has the child(ren) for 146 overnights per year and the Joneses have a parenting time schedule under which the obligor has the child(ren) 147 overnights per year. The court in the Joneses' case is required to consider a "substantial deviation" and to explain any decision that does not grant that deviation. This will, presumably, lead most courts in most cases to grant whatever they consider a substantial deviation. But the court in the Smiths' case has no obligation to even consider any deviation for extended parenting time and no obligation to explain why it has not.

If one were searching for a recipe to ensure that contentious parents would fight over one extra overnight per year, one would be hard pressed to find a better one than this.

Establishing the Basic Child Support Schedule and Issuing the Worksheet and Manual by Administrative Rule

SB 125 proposes to cede what has, to date, been considered a legislative responsibility to the executive branch of the Ohio government. It would remove the basic child support schedule and child support worksheets from the Ohio Revised Code and instruct the Department of Job and Family Services to create these, subject to legislatively imposed constraints and, also, to create an instruction manual to assist those calculating child support obligations.

This would have the benefit of allowing for regular updating of the schedule and worksheet. On the other hand, it would also enact into legislation a methodology for creating the basic child support tables—a methodology that will prove just as resistant to future legislative changes as the current legislatively-mandated basic child support schedules have proven. This is why it is very important that the proposed legislation get it right. We're likely to find ourselves operating under this methodology for the foreseeable future.

The methodology for constructing the basic child support schedule that is incorporated in SB 125 is the fourth version of the Betson-Rothbarth estimator of child-rearing expenditures (BR4). The *2017 Report* asserts that the use of the BR4 estimator (in conjunction with the proposed SSR) will result in only "moderate increases to obligation amounts throughout the entire income range of the entire schedule" (p. 9). The truth of this claim depends, of course, on what one takes to be a "moderate increase."

NPO's analysis indicates that the largest annual increase in the basic child support schedule that would result from the enactment of SB 125 is $2,684.[10] This increase arises for a couple whose combined income is just over $91,000 and who have four children subject to the child support order. While this is the greatest increase, the proposed methodology would result in increases of over $2,000 per year in a great many cases:

- For families with TWO children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $58,200 through $69,600 would experience an increase of over $2,000.
- For families with THREE children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $71,400 through $93,000 would experience an increase of over $2,000.
- For families with FOUR children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $82,800 through $97,200 would experience an increase of over $2,000.
- For families with FIVE children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $94,800 through $102,000 would experience an increase of over $2,000.
- For families with SIX children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $115,200 through $142,800 would experience an increase of over $2,000.

And a very large number of families would see increases in the basic child support schedule of over $1,000 per year:

- For families with ONE child subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $49,800 through $70,200 would experience an increase of over $1,000.
- For families with TWO children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $52,800 through $100,200 would experience an increase of over $1,000.
- For families with THREE children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $64,800 through $103,200 would experience an increase of over $1,000.
- For families with FOUR children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $75,600 through $106,800 would experience an increase of over $1,000.
- For families with FIVE children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $87,000 through $150,000 would experience an increase of over $1,000.[11]
- For families with SIX children subject to the child support order, those with combined incomes of $99,600 through $150,000 would experience an increase of over $1,000.

For the higher income people, these increases might be "moderate." However, these increases will hit lower income people much harder.

[10] It is possible to compare the effects only for combined incomes of less than $150,000 per year since the current schedule stops at that point. However, it appears that, had the current tables been extended to the $300,000 combined annual income that SB125 proposes, the increases created would not exceed the $2,684 noted in the text.
[11] Again, it's not possible to compare the effects only for families with combined incomes of over $150,000 per year since the current schedule stops at that point.

What's Missing from SB 125

Undertaking a major overhaul of Ohio's child support statutes presents an opportunity to address a number of vital matters that SB 125 leaves untouched. This represents a missed opportunity.

Given NPO's primary focus on promoting shared parenting, of special concern here is Ohio's failure to provide separate child support worksheets for sole custody and shared parenting. Separated parents who are truly sharing parental responsibilities and not just operating under a nominal "shared parenting" plan are in a very different situation from a sole custody model. Both parents have significant direct expenses on the children. Both parents have similar parenting responsibilities that might limit professional advancement. The children clearly have two homes, not one home and a place where they visit the other parent.

The sole custody worksheet is designed from the ground up to deal with a situation where children have only one home and almost all of the child-related expenses happen in that household. (Indeed, as ODJFS has acknowledged, the current model assumes that *all* child-related expenses occur in the obligee's household.) The sole custody worksheet provides for deviations from this model and the methodology and worksheet provided for in SB 125 would enhance those mechanisms by adding a standard parenting time adjustment and strengthening extended parenting time as a deviation factor.

However, these are "Band-Aid solutions" to try to ameliorate the effects of employing a fundamentally flawed model to deal with shared parenting cases. An adequate shared parenting worksheet based on the income shares model would begin, like each of our current worksheets, by estimating a combined child support obligation based on the combined incomes of the parents. Then it would apportion that responsibility between the two parents based on their share of the combined income. The difference would come in how the shared parenting worksheet distributed that combined child support obligation between the two parents' households. Unlike the sole custody worksheet which begins by putting it all in one household and then makes adjustments and deviations, a methodologically sound shared parenting worksheet would distribute the combined child support obligation between the two households based on the expected child-related expenses in the two households. The time that the children spend in each household is the starting point for that division But, of course, there are necessary adjustments based on who is paying for health insurance, special activities, private schooling (if any), and so forth.

Failure to create a separate shared parenting worksheet that is based on a shared parenting model is a missed opportunity. But it is worse. Because it has proven so difficult to get any fundamental changes to Ohio's child support laws through the legislature for a quarter of a century, the failure to make this needed change now is likely to signal its doom for the foreseeable future.

And, the failure to deal appropriately with the increasingly number of separated families who are engaging in, or wish to engage in, shared parenting is harmful to our children. This is because it sustains a barrier to true shared parenting. And, there is a large and growing body of social science research that indicates—as clearly as social science can—that it is usually best for children of

separated parents when parents share fully in raising the child.[12] Ohio should be doing everything it can to promote shared parenting when both parents are fit, loving parents and the practicalities permit it. Unfortunately, treating child support calculations for shared parenting couples like a minor adjustment to the sole custody model does not help to promote shared parenting. Instead, it is major impediment to it.

Conclusion

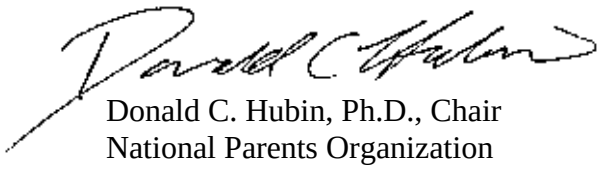
National Parents Organization applauds SB 125 for addressing the need—a federally mandated need—to provide an appropriate self-sufficiency reserve. Failure to provide a reasonable self-sufficiency reserve has been a terrible flaw in Ohio law.

NPO recognizes, as well, other beneficial changes that SB 125 would introduce. It would provide for better handling of cases where a parent has multiple child support obligations under separate orders. It would establish a child care cost-sharing cap to prevent one parent from selecting a child care plan with unnecessary costs and imposing those on the other parent. It would allow for administrative review and continuation of court-ordered deviations when the grounds of those deviations are clear and still present, saving many parents the need to return to court. It would weaken the post-termination arrears payoff from a requirement to a presumption, which will allow child support agencies some flexibility in dealing with these cases. And, it would allow a court to deviate from guideline child support amounts in recognition of one parent's financial support for an emancipated child of the couple. These are all welcome changes.

However, National Parents Organization cannot, consistent with its mission of promoting shared parenting when parents live apart, support SB 125 in its current version. Indeed, it must oppose it and urge its members to insist that their legislators vote against it unless it is suitably amended to address the problems outlined above.

NPO would welcome the opportunity to work with Ohio legislators to create suitable amendments to SB 125. There is much that needs to be changed in current Ohio child support law and SB 125 makes some of the necessary changes. NPO looks forward to the prospect of being able to endorse a revised version of SB 125.

Respectfully,



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[12] National Parents Organization will provide, upon request, up-to-date scientific research concerning the benefits of substantially equal shared parenting when parents are living apart. In Ohio, contact donhubin@nationalparentsorganization.org for information.