

Judge David L.

**BAZELON CENTER**  
for Mental Health Law

**NEWS**

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## National Expert Calls for Children's Mental Health Reform in Ohio

(Columbus, OH) April 27, 2004—A nationally recognized expert on children's mental health issues will call on state lawmakers to improve access to services for children with mental or emotional disorders when she testifies before the Senate Finance and Financial Institutions Committee later today.

Tammy Seltzer, a senior staff attorney with the Washington-based Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, will testify before the committee this afternoon. Seltzer will call for swift passage of a modified version of S.B. 192, legislation to reform Ohio's troubled children's mental health system. The following is brief statement from Seltzer on the legislation and the crisis in children's mental health.

"Because families face a critical shortage in services for children with mental or emotional disorders, children suffer needlessly and families are torn apart.

"In Ohio and elsewhere in America, help for children with mental or emotional disorders often comes at a terrible price. Parents struggle to deal with crises that could have been prevented, and some ultimately turn their children over to the state because they know nowhere else to turn. Children are traumatized and family bonds are strained or shattered.

"State lawmakers have a golden opportunity to show their commitment to address this crisis by adopting S.B. 192, which would prevent parents from having to relinquish custody of their children when they need out-of-home care."

Seltzer will also call on the Senate to modify the legislation to ensure that children are placed in the least restrictive setting appropriate to their needs.

"A therapeutic foster home is far better for children than an institution. Children can thrive in a family-like setting that allows them to maintain contact with their loved ones. Therapeutic foster care is proven effective and is significantly less expensive than residential treatment centers.

"S.B. 192 is a good first step, but it shouldn't be the last. Ohio should seize this opportunity and use it a springboard to make the state a model for access to children's mental health services."