

**NEW LIGHT**



**Consultants, Inc.**

*"WHERE HOPE BEGINS!"*

P.O. Box 359, Millington, MI 48746  
(989) 871-6695  
Fax (989) 871-6336

**NEW LIGHT**



**Child & Family Institute**

#12

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My name is Tina Sentell, I am the Child Welfare Director at New Light Child & Family Institute.

First, I would like to Thank the House Committee for hearing my testimony today. I would also like to Thank Rep. Mary Whiteford and all the members of the Adoption and Foster Care Task Force for giving me the opportunity and inviting me to speak in front of you today.

As I mentioned I work for a private agency in Millington Michigan. We are located in Tuscola County and are the only private Child Placing Agency in the county. New Light Child & Family Institute serves children and families in 22 counties. We work to provide good service to our children, parents and Relative and foster care providers. New Light provides not only foster care, but also a variety of other services such as adoption, foster home licensing, counseling/therapy services and training opportunities. I tell you this, because New Light is not just a Child Placing Agency, we work to build up all that come through our doors. Just this past week on Thursday April 21<sup>st</sup> we had our Foster Parent Appreciation dinner, 80 percent of our homes were in attendance. This is not new to us, as we do several activities with our Foster parents and children and families and have a very high attendance rate at each event. We work hard to build those very important relationships that are the foundation for a Team approach for every child.

In June the Task Force came to New Light for what I was told was to be a 10-minute presentation, instead it was an hour and a half of meaningful conversation. The Task Force members took the time to speak with our Leadership Team and gain insight into what we as workers and an agency face when working to advocate for our children and families. The bills present in front of you are bills that will make providing services better, along with obtaining services for our families. These bills do not just affect Child Placing agencies, but they affect our Child Caring Institutions as well. The Task Force has definitely had a boots on the ground approach and worked to improve several areas of need with these bills.

New Light began as an idea on a picnic table, because of a dream it grew into a small agency. Although we have had our share of difficulties, almost 20 years ago when I began the foster care program, I could not foresee what New Light would become, much less see me standing here in front of all of you. I believe that when Rep. Mary Whiteford began her journey chairing this Task Force, she may have had some similar feelings. It is through gaining knowledge, perseverance and sacrifice that we are all here today. Michigan's Child Welfare is not perfect, but with these bills it will pave a better way for us as advocates and service providers. At the end of the day isn't that what we all want, to provide better service to our children and families.

Thank you all for your time!