

76th House District

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Sarah M. LaTourette
Assistant Majority Floor Leader

Committees

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Chairman Arndt, Vice-Chair Pelanda, Ranking Member Howse and members of the Aging and Long Term Care Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 527.

This legislation was brought to me by Area Agency on Aging advocates concerned about elder abuse through isolation and separation from loved ones. This "Visitation Bill" seeks to empower and unify individuals and families who are being torn apart due to an abusive caretaker alienating or isolating their spouse, sibling, or patient from their loved ones. The proposed legislation will support many Ohioans by giving them a voice to speak up against abuse directed towards adults and to help the aging population maintain their independence and dignity. To date, 11 states have passed laws relating to this, and 33 are undergoing the legislative process.

Kerri Kasem daughter of the late radio legend, Casey Kasem, experienced the pain of being turned away from her dying father by his wife, her step-mother. Her father's life ended without his daughter by his side. Kerri turned her grief into the Kasem Cares Foundation. The work of Kasem Cares addresses the experiences of families whose family members need protection from abuse, regardless of their financial status. A family's grief seems overwhelming when their loved one, from whom they have been alienated, passes away.

The proposed Visitation Bill would give Ohioans the right to petition for reasonable visitation through the probate court in the county where the incompetent or ward resides. In addition to granting visitation, the court will be able to impose limits on the visitation or deny the petition after a review of the facts of the case.

There are 15,000 Ohioans turning 65 every month, and we are rapidly approaching a time where nearly 50% of the population will be 65 or older.

77 South High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111
Phone: (614)644-5088
Email: Rep76@ohiohouse.gov

The frequency of cases where an individual is prevented from seeing a loved one will likely continue to increase as the elderly population grows.

Recently, I hosted an interested parties meeting to allow stakeholders to provide beneficial feedback on the As Introduced version of the bill. Many helpful recommendations were made by the attendees, and I hope to incorporate several of those recommendations into a substitute bill, while still maintaining the intent of this bill.

Again, thank you Chairman Arndt and members of the committee for taking the time to listen to sponsor testimony on House Bill 527. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.