



Representative Janine Boyd

Ohio House District 09

Sponsor Testimony House Bill 448

Good afternoon Chairman Ginter, Vice Chair LaTourette, and esteemed fellow members of the Community and Family Advancement Committee. It's again my honor to stand before you today, and share my testimony with you as joint sponsor of HB 448 with our own Vice Chair. And again, to draw your attention to another issue children all too often face, under the unpredictable circumstances related to matters of custody, and over which they have little to no influence.

In the House Committee on Community and Family Advancement, we often discuss how to best help those who need our help most. Some proposals make it out of these committee room walls at lightning speed. Some endure extraordinarily lengthy vetting, and some may never reach beyond our discussions and into the lives of those citizens who inspired them. I have extra hope for this bill and the others that similarly aim at stabilizing the lives of children in crisis.

According to the National Center for Youth Law, many children report experiencing significant pain, anxiety, guilt, grief and lost identity when they enter the foster care system. That's the first loss. Add to that, the all too often separation of siblings- whether at the point of entry, later in their foster care placement experiences, or even at adoption. That separation of siblings represents another loss.

Systematic and comprehensive research on sibling bonds and placement began relatively recently, so there's limited research related to children in foster care specifically. However, the research that is available overwhelmingly indicates that maintenance of the sibling bond is crucial to child development and adjustment, especially for children who've already been separated from the only homes and parents or caregivers they've ever known.

Brothers and sisters provide emotional support, comfort, a sense of belonging and stability, when their worlds have been turned upside down. Chairman Ginter and esteemed members, there are far reaching, negative long term outcomes to the systematic separation of sibling groups- but I will reserve that discussion for later hearings in which we'll welcome the child welfare experts and foster care youth who've seen and experienced them first hand. Along with my joint sponsor, we hope that ours and future testimony will positively effect your support of HB 448.

We're happy to answer any questions you might have.