



NOBLE/ORGANIZE! OHIO: (p) 216.651.2606 (f) 216.651.2633  
[www.organizeohio.org/NOBLE](http://www.organizeohio.org/NOBLE)

Chairman Ryan and members of the committee:

My name is Quo Vadis Ellison. I am here representing the Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE), an organization that works to give a voice to low income and vulnerable residents in Ohio state budget and other issues. I also began as a foster care parent in 1972 and became a kinship care parent 25 years ago. In that capacity I previously served as the chair of the Cuyahoga County Foster Care Association and the Ohio Foster Care Association for over 25 years. Today the Foster Care Association is called the Family Care Association.

I am here to speak in support of HB 126. It has been estimated that there are about 125,000 children living in kinship care relationships in Ohio. That is a conservative figure, as there is no hard figure as to the number of children living in kinship care relationships in Ohio. Furthermore with the ravage of the opioid epidemic in Ohio, the number of those living with kinship care parents is substantially increasing.

Kinship care is the preferred placement to foster care. Research has shown that the outcomes for children who stay in a kinship care relationships is noticeably better than those in foster care relationships. Children in kinship care have better physical, cognitive, emotional, and skill-based scores than those in foster care. Furthermore, Children who reunify with their birth parent(s) after kinship care are less likely to re-enter foster care than those who had been in non-relative foster placements or in group care facilities.

Consequently, we should be doing whatever we can to be promoting kinship care placements and providing support for kinship care providers. It has been my experience that the largest number of kinship care providers tend to be grandparents who are low income or on fixed income. There is available state support for kinship care providers such as monetary, child care, legal assistance, medical care and mental health and counseling. However, so many of these kinship parents are not aware that any of this support exists. They frequently feel isolated and inadequate. They are not the caregivers that they wish to be nor are they providing the care that their fragile kinship children need.

This is why HB 126, the Navigator bill is so important. By implementing a Navigator program, it will connect the kinship care providers to the support that is necessary for them to be the best caregivers that they can be. By connecting kinship care parents to the

support that is available to them, it can ensure that the vulnerable children who are with their kinship care parents can grow up in the best environment for them to thrive.

I urge the Finance Committee to approve House Bill 126.