

**Standing Committees**

Energy and Natural Resources – Vice Chair  
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Ohio's 70<sup>th</sup> House District: Ashland and Portions of Holmes and Medina Counties

**House Civil Justice Committee**

**House Bill 500 – Visitation**

**Sponsor Testimony**

**26 February 2020**

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 500 along side my joint sponsor Representative McClain.

House Bill 500 was brought to us by Area Agency on Aging advocates to shed light on 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 everyday 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 violence directed towards seniors and to help the aging population maintain their independence and dignity.

If enacted, House Bill 500 will allow Ohioans the right to petition for reasonable visitation through the probate court in the county where the incompetent or ward resides. If the petitioner is able to display burden of proof by

clear and convincing evidence that their family member has been coerced or denied the information to allow a visit, a court may be able to grant visitation, impose limits on a 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. Together, we can work toward ending the silence of elder neglect and abuse by supporting measures to give loved ones options to visit one another.

Chair Hambley, Vice Chair Patton, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. I look forward to answering your questions after Representative McClain's testimony.