

**Testimony on H.B. 14: Region-based Kinship Care Navigator Program**  
**House Health Committee**  
**May 28, 2019**

Chairman Merrin, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the Health Committee:

My name is Diane Howard. I am here representing the Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). Many years ago, a situation arose requiring me to take in 4 of my grandchildren for a time period of two years. At the time I was unaware that there was any state support available to me and proceeded to care for these children out of the kindness of my heart. The entire experience was extremely difficult. At the time I also had an extremely ill son battling Multiple Sclerosis that I was taking care of. My four grandchildren each were attending different schools making our morning routine chaotic. I was low income and struggling in all facets of life, especially financially. I took on two nursing jobs to make sure that each of the children were clothed, fed, etc. Many times, I was forced to take time off from work to accommodate the children's need putting an even deeper financial strain on me.

My story highlights the importance of implementing HB 14 and creating a regionally based kinship care navigator program. I would have undoubtedly benefited from knowing about and having a one stop shop that directed me towards much needed resources. 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, while relieving some of the burdens associated with being a caregiver. 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 members of the committee to support House Bill 14.