

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 Quo Vadis Ellison. I am here representing the Northern Ohioans for Budget Legislation Equality (NOBLE). I began as a foster care parent in 1972 and became a kinship care parent 30+ years ago. In that capacity I previously served as the chair of the Cuyahoga County Foster Care Association and the Ohio Foster Care Association, now known as the Family Care Association for over 25 years.

30+ years ago when I became a kinship caregiver the resources available to me were scarce, in addition there was very little awareness and guidance on obtaining these resources. I personally spent a significant amount of time learning the kinship care system in the state, finding out all of the resources available to kinship caregivers. Eventually, as a veteran kinship care provider I myself became a point of contact for many caregivers seeking assistance navigating the complex system. In this position I have done my best to assist. Amongst those seeking my guidance there was very little to no knowledge that there even existed state support for kinship care providers such as monetary, child care, legal assistance, medical care and mental health and counseling. Many of these caregivers were/are low income grandparents, like me, relying heavily on fixed incomes inclusive of personal retirement checks, disability checks etc., to care for their children.

This is why HB 14; 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 members of the committee to support House Bill 14.