

**Proponent Testimony**  
**HB 405**  
**Adoption Network Cleveland**  
**Betsie Norris, Executive Director**

Chairman Wiggam, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit written proponent testimony for HB 405. I regret not being able to offer the testimony in person, but appreciate your consideration of our thoughts.

The Adoption Network Cleveland (ANC) is a non-profit organization whose goals are to advocate, educate and support those who are impacted by adoption and foster care. Although not a placement agency, ANC works closely with birth families, adoptive families and adoptees themselves.

As a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advocate for better adoption policy, educate Ohioans about adoption and foster care, and support the numerous individuals whose lives are affected by adoption, Adoption Network Cleveland is pleased to support the Family Forward Initiative, HB 405.

I want to thank Representative Cross and Treasurer Sprague for their innovative and proactive approach to this legislation. Each year hundreds of Ohio foster children age out of care, having never discovered the blessings of a loving and permanent family. In some cases, prospective parents were unable to adopt these children due to financial hurdles. While adopting from foster care does not come with high fees, there are often other expenses related to bringing a new child or children into the home. We cannot let money or finances be an obstacle to finding homes for these children. The Family Forward

Initiative makes significant changes to Ohio law that will positively impact those seeking to adopt.

Tax credits and other assistance are important ways to enable adoption. But coupling those with low interest loans to help bridge the gap between the time expenses are incurred and tax credits are realized, will have a positive and meaningful impact for those families seeking to adopt.

Finally, it should be noted that the language has been drafted in a flexible manner to allow loans to be used for many adoption related expenses. In addition to agency and legal fees, loans can be used to cover other expenditures that are directly related to the adoption. This will allow families adopting from foster care to use the program if needed.

Thank you for considering my testimony and I encourage your support of HB 405.