Chairman Ginter, Vice-Chairman LaTourette, Ranking Member Boyd and members of the House Community and Family Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Bill 420.

House Bill 420 will designate November as adoption awareness month. HB 420 is important legislation because too many of our children here in Ohio are in the system without family stability or support and many families willing to take in children do not have the information or societal support to adopt. In United States, the types of adoptions available are Fost-Adopt, which places a child in your home as a foster child with the expectation that they will become adopted by their foster family. Infant Adoption which can be done through a lawyer physician or other facilitator. Independent adoption, which does not include counseling for birth parents or financial assistance for any special needs that were not documented at birth. And finally children living in foster care, these adoptions can be initiated by contacting a public or private agency in the community.

Currently, the month of November has been designated National Adoption Month. In 1976, Michael Dukakis, the Governor of Massachusetts, promoted Adoption Week to raise the need for adoptive families for children in foster care. Since that time adoption awareness grew to National Adoption Week in 1984 and then the entire month of November dedicated to bringing awareness to foster care and the need for adoption.

According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families annual report, the number of kids in foster care across the nation in 2016 was 437,465. The number of children served by the State of Ohio by Foster care in 2016 was 23,646. Ohio is one the top 5 states with the highest number of kids served by foster care. That is 23,646 of our children who have gone without a well-balanced home life.

I am proud to continue this path by making it a priority to give organizations, our community, and most deservedly the children served by foster care a platform to advocate for this issue.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on House Bill 420. I will be happy to take questions following Rep. Boyd’s testimony.

**Rep. Boyd’s Testimony Start**

Good afternoon Chairman Ginter, Vice Chair LaTourette, and esteemed fellow members of the Community and Family Advancement Committee. It’s my honor to share my testimony with you today as joint sponsor of HB 420 with Representative Emilia Sykes. Indeed, it’s always a privilege for me to talk about policy opportunities for our body to consider, in terms of children. All children. But, especially children anxiously longing for families, families earnestly praying to have children, the resources available or not yet available to them, and how we might better support them all.

We in the legislature have passed a wide range of “awareness month” bills. We do that, I believe, at least in part, to engage the public on a subject matter that is worthy of their attention. With “awareness month” legislation, there’s opportunity for advocacy organizations and related programs to increase their outreach activities. In the case of adoption awareness, I know from personal and professional experience, it’s an opportunity to recruit willing foster-to-adopt families; highlight our kinship caregiver families who are heroes in the shadows of family crisis; educate families who might be unsure about adoption; and even engage legislative bodies on initiatives that might address the growing waiting child crisis in our state. Yes, it is a crisis. According to our Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, there are nearly 3000 children and youth in Ohio’s foster care system, currently eligible for adoption. That does not include the children whose families are in addiction crisis, and who are entering the system daily.

Given these reasons and so many others, it is fitting and timely that we bring before the House committee on Community and Family Advancement, a bill that creates Adoption Awareness month in the our state.

Thank you kindly, for your attention and support. I’m happy to take any questions from the committee.