Chairman Burke, Vice-Chairman Beagle, Ranking Member Tavares and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid 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.