November 5, 2019

Ohio House Health Committee

Proponent Testimony HB 188

Prohibit blindness from denying or limiting care of minor

Submitted by: Dan Kelley

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony before this committee regarding HB 188. I am here to advocate for the rights of parents who are blind and visually impaired. I understand that newborns can be taken away from their parents immediately after birth by a social worker who may not realize the abilities of parents who are blind. Parent’s level of sight will come up and dominate discussions and rulings in custody hearings. In 2013 during my divorce, my blindness was up for discussion and was used as a means for my boy’s mother to gain full custody. It was claimed that I could not take care of my sons, transport to and from school or events, keep my house clean and much more.

Fortunately, I have shared custody of our children, due in large part to the work of our guardian ad litem, who visited my residence and reviewed my methods for transporting our children, giving them medicine, and meeting any of their needs.

People who are blind do things differently than people who can see. We have technology tools, methods of organization, and some of us build a strong support network.

I see my children every day. I help with homework, make their meals, I am there for the choices they make, good and bad. We’re involved in our community, in scouts, playing recreational sports. We ride bikes, camp, fish, shop, clean and do it all very successfully. I am a full time teacher at the Ohio State School for the Blind, guest lecturer at Ohio State and Shawnee State, provide classes for ESC of Ohio and have a technology consulting business where I contract with OOD and the I can Connect Program. I work a lot to provide for my children and to be a good example for my sons that it can take hard work to be successful.

Thank you so much for this opportunity. It is very important for me that I have had this chance to provide testimony. We need to always look at people based on person first and their abilities and not make assumptions, because they have a disability. Sincerely,

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