November 5, 2019

Ohio House Health Committee

Proponent Testimony HB 188

Prohibit blindness from denying or limiting care of minor

Submitted by: Heather Leiterman

Chair Lipps, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and Members of the Ohio House Health Committee:

Good morning members of the committee and thank you for giving me the time to speak to you about HB 188.

On a beautiful day in May 1993 I was getting ready to leave the hospital after the delivery of my first child. My son was healthy, I had an uncomplicated delivery, and we were ready to go home. Our discharge papers have been signed and the car seat approved. So with baby in car seat we proceeded to leave the hospital. We didn’t get very far into the hallway when we were stopped by a nurse That I didn’t know. At Doctors Hospital north at that time, mother and baby had the same nurse. I knew this wasn’t anyone who had worked on our case. The nurse proceeded to tell me and my family that I could not leave the hospital with baby until I had spoken with the hospital social worker. I called my doctor to ask if this was routine for all first-time mothers. He insured me it was not and that he would be right over. Luckily for me my doctors office was in walking distance to the hospital. My doctor arrived very quickly almost at the same time as the social worker. He took her out into the hall and spoke to her out of my hearing. He did tell me when he returned to my room without the social worker that a nurse on duty tonight I delivered my son was concerned when she found out that I was a blind mother. Her concerns only grew exponentially when she found out that the largest majority of my support system were all blind and low vision. She was concerned that blind people would pose a safety risk to my son. This woman did not just have low expectations of a blind parent, she had no expectations of a blind parent.

The baby boy that I spoke of is now 26 years old works full-time at big fun in the short north and attends classes at Columbus State community college.

We at the national Federation of the blind believe that low expectations are barriers between blind parents and their dreams

Thank you for your time and I urge you to pass this legislation as quickly as possible. Thank you.

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,

Heather Leiterman

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