



Representative Gail Pavliga
Ohio's 75th House District

Dear Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the Civil Justice Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 289. This bill seeks to provide stability for Ohio's foster children in a couple of different ways.

HB 289 would modify the kinship placement search process and increase efforts to prioritize placement with an adult relative (like a grandparent), or a non-relative that has a significant relationship with the child (like a close family friend). This diligent search requires interviews to be conducted as necessary, comprehensive searches of databases available to the agency, and a written notice to be provided to any adult relatives or non-relatives that have a significant relationship with the child.

Additionally, this legislation seeks to give the court greater flexibility when it comes to the placement of the child. HB 289 prohibits the court from approving a change in the child's placement, unless it is in the child's best interests and requested by the child's foster caregiver, and permits the court to continue the child's current placement if the following apply:

1. The child's current placement has been in a stable home environment for the past 9 months
2. A change in the child's placement would be detrimental to the child's emotional well-being
3. The child's foster caregiver has not requested, in writing, that the placement be changed

HB 289 gives foster caregivers the ability to participate in all court proceedings in relation to the child in temporary custody, as well as repealing the requirement that a public or private child placing agency must consider giving preference to a child's adult relative over a nonrelative caregiver when determining adoptive placement for the child.

This legislation is a step in the right direction to improving the foster care system, and the lives of the children in it. These modifications to the current language will help our courts to put these foster children in the best situation for them to develop emotionally, and have a happy childhood.

Once again, thank you chairman Hillyer for allowing us to provide sponsor testimony on HB 289. At this time I would like to turn the floor over to my joint sponsor, Representative McClain.