

PROPONENT TESTIMONY - HB508

TESTIMONY OF **Matthew A Kendeigh**

Alienated Father

CIVIL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 134TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

MARCH 8, 2022

Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB508.

My name is Matthew A Kendeigh, I reside in North Ridgeville, OH (Lorain County). I am an unmarried single father that is currently going through a rough custody battle and I am seeing first hand how my 8 month olds rights and best interests are currently being ignored. As a father that has and is currently raising my 8 year old on my own as his mother passed away when he was 8 months old from a battle with Breast Cancer. I have proven that I am a father and can father and want to share in the parenting duties to raise my son in his best interest.

[Introduce yourself - who you are, where you are from, and relevant professional expertise you have related to this bill, if any]

HB 508 is not a bill for parents but a bill for children to provide all children in the state of Ohio their rights to be raised by 2 parents given that the parents are both stable, reliable parents. As this bill is written it will allow the children the rights, but if a parent is unable to provide the necessary needs for the child it will allow the courts to properly adjust as appropriately needed. Currently many parents are alienated from being a proper parent for their child.

[Why this bill is important for Ohioans, add any relevant professional expertise or insight that will help inform committee members]

As a first time father at the age of 32, my son's mother was re-diagnosed with stage 4 Breast cancer when he was only 2 Months old. At this time I was forced to take on the responsibility of raising a newborn infant while supporting and taking care of my fiance. If not being a father for the first time and learning the ropes isn't hard enough, adding in taking care of a 37 year old adult that is relying on you as much as your infant. While continuing to work, I was still taking care of my fiance and raising a newborn infant. I took on the task and ran with it until my fiance passed away at the young age of 37 and my son

was only 8 months old. I had raised my son on my own since he was 8 months old and he is now 8 years old. I have always looked out for my son's best interests and have supported him since the day he was born. I am also a child of divorced parents that can say I have had first hand experience on the child's side. I had 2 loving and caring parents that were both supportive but I was also manipulated to believe that my father was not the best to care for my needs, as I have matured and have learned how things occurred my father missed out as did I with being able to bond with my father the way I should have and would have been beneficial to me as a child growing up.

I became a second time father June 19, 2021 when my son was born. Since his birth his mother has abused the current law to push me away and has attempted to prevent me from being a father to our child who is now 8 months old. A child should never be removed from either parent at any age but as a newborn my son has not been provided the opportunity to bond with myself as his father, my older son as his brother or my entire side of the family as the mother has controlled our son since birth and limits the amount of time my son gets with me. We live less than 500 feet apart and being able to see my son has been a challenge. Both parents should be supporting a loving and caring relationship towards each other and not manipulating a child's feelings by alienating a parent from having the opportunity to build a positive relationship with myself as his father. I want to be the same father to my youngest as I am a father to my oldest. The current law is failing my son and not supporting his best interests.

Ohio needs HB508 to pass to provide our children their appropriate rights to a much more positive upbringing and life. With the passage of this bill, it will support more parents the opportunity to love and support their children, reducing the number of single parent children, a much more healthy upbringing, and less children having psychological issues and children from being pulled one way or the other.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony on HB 508. I would be happy to answer any questions.