

Chair Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and Members of the Ohio House Civil Justice Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 202 . I am a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio. We are a consumer organization that believes in the full capacity of blind people and has the power, influence, diversity, and determination to help transform the dreams of blind people into reality. We believe in blind people because we are blind people. Our democratically elected leaders and our diverse nationwide membership are blind people, our families, and our friends.

The National Federation of the Blind fully supports not considering disability an impediment to caring for minors. We believe that SB 202 will accomplish this task of battling low expectations and misconceptions of the capabilities of disabled parents.

My name is Richard Payne, I am a blind parent, and my daughter is the love of my life. When me and her mother was able to have her, it gave us boundless joy. We both are blind and because of that people thought that we would not be able to be good parents. Her mother wanted to take custody of her child after birth, but the social worker questioned our abilities and others thought we would not be able to do the things that she would need to be a healthy kid like changing diapers and giving meds. We decided to take care of her and that was the best thing that we have ever done. Why anyone would think it is right to take a child from a blind person based just on the fact that they are blind is a very crazy thought in this day and time. The fact is that blind people have been raising children forever.

I would like to conclude with saying that this is an issue in Ohio and please assist us by getting this bill to the governor's desk.

Thanks sincerely

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The National Federation of the Blind knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.