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Ohio House Civil Justice Committee

December 13, 2022

Proponent Testimony SB 202

Prohibit blindness from denying or limiting care of minors

Dear Chair, Brett Hudson Hillyer, Vice Chair, Diane V. Grendell, and Ranking Member, Tavi Galonski,

Good Afternoon,

My name is Suzanne Turner and I am in support of the amendment for SB: 202, that will respect and protect persons with disabilities to parent their own children, become a guardian for children in crisis and to experience the wonderful opportunity to adopt or become a foster parent!

Thank you so much on behalf of persons with disabilities across Ohio who are counting on you to support this important bill. For several years, we have been communicating in person and through correspondence our support for what will be a historic bill in Ohio represented by your administration.

I asked that you highly consider passing and granting us a wonderful Christmas gift that has been haunting persons with disabilities for many years. I am the president of a chapter that has over 90 percent of blind parents who have raised their own children, grandchildren and often times other relative's children. It takes a village to raise a child. This is true for those who do not have a disability and those who do. The greatest thing about this is, we have over 50,000 members in the National Federation of the Blind, who are ready to support, guide, and lend a listening ear to blind parents raising their children.

Moreover, peer to peer support has become one of the premiere skills in various occupations today. For example, I am a former employee of Medical Mutual of Ohio Insurance that promotes providing assistance to those who look like who are being served by the company. It helps customers to relate to those who have similar characteristics. This is true in everyone's world, regardless who you are. If you purchase a charger "car", then you can relate to the problems that it has when it needs

a particular part. Therefore, as a blind parent, I can relate to another blind parent who has a skill set that would benefit me using adaptive aides when matching clothing, using a talking thermometer or traveling to the doctor's office. Yes, blind people successfully have done this for many, many years!

In addition, there are networks around Ohio that offers support for people with disabilities that offer support to families with newborns, toddlers and preteens alike. This is no different than agencies that support those families who are not disabled. Healthy Grow, Catholic Charities, Providence House and some churches provide support to families with no or little cost. This is why community resources are a help to everyone who are in need, disabled or not . Therefore, equal access is for all as what we are fighting for with this bill.

Furthermore, I have enjoyed the ability to parent my two girls, who are now adults. I am so blessed to have three grandchildren that I see often. There is no book, there is no rules to follow, but there is an innate ability that everyone has a right to parent unless there is harm to a child! My two young women are healthy, giving back to society and raising their own children. They have depended on me and their father, who is blind to give them support, guidance and creative ways to parent their children. They are sighted as well as their offspring's.

The National Federation of the Blind philosophy states that, with opportunity and support we can live the lives we want, which includes parenting and making sure all children are safe, protected and remain in the homes of capable people who have disabilities. Just imagine someone appearing in your hospital room to remove your newborn with no just cause, just imagine during your divorce your spouse alleges that you are an unfit mother or father, and just think about the fact that you are not given an equal opportunity to adopt a child that is in need of a loving home. This is wrong!

So, I am praying that you pass this bill with the amendment. We are counting on your support to help us help others!

I am in support of the amendment and again I hope that this is a Christmas gift to be remembered for Ohio.

Thank you so much for all you do for the blind and persons with disabilities in Ohio!