

**Proponent Testimony – HB14**  
**Families and Aging Committee, Ohio House of Representatives**  
**Melissa Price, Parental Services Coordinator**

Chairwoman Schmidt, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of this committee, thank you for giving me a chance to speak in favor of House Bill 14.

My name is Melissa Price and I am a Parental Services Coordinator. I have worked with over 8,000 families in family courts over the last 17 years. My role is to aid parents in implementing the use of cooperative parenting steps to reach goals. I assist with finding the professional help that the client needs such as a doctor, therapist, parental training, and/or an attorney. With consent from the client I communicate with their current representation and any other professional, if needed, to ensure all parties are working together in an effective manner.

When I first began in 2006 over 90 % of my clients were fathers. Now in 2023 more than 50% of my clients are mothers or grandmothers. It appears as the system is no longer removing children from an involved loving Father's life; now this epidemic of systematic alienation is occurring with fit, healthy mothers and at an alarming rate. These Mothers are having to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars just to be a part of their children's lives. They are having to pay for an Attorney, a Mediator, a Guardian At Litem, part of their Ex-Partners Attorney fees, and Psychological Evaluations that run as high \$30,000 or more. Many times they state their Counsel fails to communicate, explain the plan or even get them parenting time as they had prior to the separation. By the time they find me, both men and women are on their 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Attorney. More than 85% of my cases are extended out for the whole 2 years and lacking much progress or resolutions.

In all of these cases, what I do not see is a parent who was only involved 4 days a month. Most of my clients were involved daily when the two parties were in a live-in relationship. This is so destructive to the parent-child dynamic and not only affects them but their future grandchildren and how these children will raise them. For whatever the reason the courts have no problem with knowing that a parent was involved daily but then are turned into nothing more than just a visitor with zero parental rights.

The cases that I have seen that involve increased Domestic Violence are not the 50/50 cases but the ones where a parent is forced to accept their wrongful removal, starting with possible "supervision" even if they are not "unfit" and are forced to either spend their life savings or have no parenting time. When you take normal people and force them in an abnormal situation you

will see an increase in domestic violence due to the litigating nature causing a major power struggle.

I see these cases like a big Mountain and most are having to start at the bottom and would benefit financially, emotionally, and be more time efficient if their rights and parenting time started in the middle of the Mountain. Then they wouldn't have so far to climb just to get to something fair. Parents are much less likely to share their responsibilities when there is a winner-takes-all outcome.

I ask that you please support HB14. I believe that a true 50/50 starting point will help families more than hurt families. I'm happy to answer any questions you have about the many cases I've worked with over the years and how this bill would have helped them.

Thank you