

Tina Swithin
Written Testimony Opposing Ohio HB 14
March 20, 2023

Thank you, Members of the Chair.

I am testifying in opposition of HB 14

My name is Tina Swithin.

I'm an internationally recognized author and family court advocate – and because of my own family court experience, I started a blog called One Mom's Battle over a decade ago. This little blog turned into a grassroots movement. Today, One Mom's Battle is a community of over 150,000 parents worldwide and we have a very active chapter in Ohio.

I am also a founding member of the National Safe Parents Organization - we advocate for evidence-based policies which put child safety and risks at the forefront of child custody decisions.

Across the country, our family court system is in crisis --and our children are the ones suffering the most. The family court system is one of the most important branches of our judicial system.

Ohio already has a 50-50 presumption for child custody cases as do most states. Creating a one-size-fits-all approach to family court decisions coupled with the fact that most judicial officers have little to no training in trauma, domestic violence and coercive control, is a recipe for disaster.

- The overwhelming majority of custody agreements (90%) are reached in out of court settlements. (Ollendick, White & White, *The Oxford Handbook of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 499 (2018).)
- Only 10% of parents litigate custody. Numerous studies have found that 75% of contested custody litigants report a history of domestic violence. (See generally, Jaffe, Zerwer & Poisson, *Access Denied: The Barriers of Violence & Poverty for Abused Women and their Children After Separation 1* (citing four studies, all of which found 70-75% of cases in litigation involved allegations of domestic violence).)
- Domestic abuse is an “adverse childhood experience” (ACE), even if they are not themselves directly physically or sexually abused. (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt & Kenny , *Child Witnesses to Domestic Violence: A Meta-Analytic Review 71 Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 339-352 (x) (concluding that children who witness parental violence have significantly worse social, psychological, and academic outcomes than children in non-violent homes); <https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/> .)

Passing this legislation would be detrimental to children. Child safety should be at the forefront of all judicial decisions in family court, these are complex issues that require a laser beam focus, not an automated 50-50 decision that will put the most vulnerable members of our society at great risk.

We need improved legislation that prioritize child safety, this bill will take us backwards in our efforts to protect children. Child safety is a responsibility that belongs to all of us. Child safety is a bipartisan responsibility –child safety is common sense.

Thank you for your time, Tina Swithin