



**Proponent Testimony H. B. 5**  
**House Families and Aging Committee**  
**Catholic Conference of Ohio**  
**June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Families and Aging Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Will Kuehnle, and I am an Associate Director with the Catholic Conference of Ohio. The Catholic Conference is the official voice of the Catholic Church in Ohio on matters of public policy, and we are pleased to support House Bill 5 to modernize adoption law.

The Catholic Conference is grateful for Representative Ray and Representative Baker's introduction of this legislation. Their testimony illustrated how great is the need for an effective and compassionate adoption system. As thousands of children await adoption and future parents eagerly anticipate growing their families, modernizing the Ohio adoption system is an urgent legislative task, one with a pronounced moral dimension.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have consistently celebrated the love and mercy involved in placing a child for adoption. In their 2020 document, "Accompanying Expectant Mothers Considering Adoption", the Catholic bishops look to Maya, a woman who discovered that she was pregnant six months into her freshman year of college, for wisdom. The USCCB endorses Maya's conclusions, having herself reflected on the moral landscape of adoption; namely, that we should affirm that adoption is a loving choice, let compassion be our guide, and provide parents support during and after pregnancy and placement. And at the same time, the Catholic faith sees in adoptive parents exemplars of those who fulfill the "works of mercy" that Jesus Christ enjoined on His followers to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and shelter the homeless. Our adoption code must support both birth and adoptive parents, and the many laudable provisions of House Bill 5 help assure the good of all parties.

From accompanying pregnant women considering adoption to supporting the families that choose to bring a child into their family, creating a culture of life requires "radical solidarity" with both birth and adoptive parents. House Bill 5 extends Ohio's radical solidarity with birth parents by doubling the expense disbursement ceiling; with adoptive parents by counting time spent with a relative, legal custodian or guardian toward the six-month waiting period and simplifying the process of finalizing international adoptions; and with those who are adopted by permitting adult adoption of those with developmental disabilities.

The Catholic Church continues to advocate for and work to create a world where every child is cared for and receives the blessing of a loving home. I urge your support and swift passage of House Bill 5, as a demonstration that Ohio is home to the radical solidarity that constitutes a civilization of love. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony. I'm happy to answer any questions.