

June 12, 2023

Dear Chair Schmidt, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Denson, and members of the House Families and Aging Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of House Bill 5, the Adoption Modernization Act.

My name is Kristin Wooten. I am an Ohio resident, and live in Hamilton County. I have 4 children, 2 of whom joined our family through international adoption about 10 years apart, in 2006 and 2016. While adoption has been beautiful, it is rooted in hardship and trauma for our girls. Adoptive parents and the children that are faced with adapting to a family that wasn't the one they were born into, is extremely difficult. I love that House Bill 5 will remove some of the barriers that are in front of parents as they bring children into their homes. To remove some of these barriers, frees up parents to focus on the things that really matter, like connecting with their child and helping them heal.

When we returned to Ohio with our daughters, even though we had been through mounds of paperwork, fees, etc, we still had another step when we got home which was to apply for our daughters' adoptions to be recognized in Hamilton County. When we came home, that first year especially was exhausting. We were doing our best to help our girls through all the emotions they were processing, but were too young to put into words, so it came out in their behavior. The last thing we wanted to spend time on was a re-adoption process. Since the adoption was already final through the US and through China, it just makes sense that it already be final and fully recognized through the Ohio county.

I would love to see Ohio become a place that is known for being an adoption advocate, and even being ahead of other states. I support taking new ground that will mean more adults may view the adoption process as something they are willing to undertake. This bill supports kinship parents which is a huge help. I've led an adoption support group at a local church, and many of the attendees are kinship care relatives. They are typically undersupported financially and emotionally. They are grandparents having to look for daycare and do all sorts of childrearing that they thought they were finished with, and yet they said yes. Let's support them any way we can.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proponent testimony. I ask the committee members to please vote yes on HB5 to help children find forever homes.

Sincerely,
Kristin Wooten
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