

Rosalind Smith
House Families and Aging Committee
Opponent Testimony on HB 14
May 14, 2024

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written opponent testimony on HB 14.

Hi, I am Rosalind Smith from Cincinnati, Ohio.

This bill is NOT in the best interest of every child. Many children in Hamilton County have been forced into a 50/50 arrangement that was not in their best interest. Children's lives have been disrupted for the sake of parental rights. In 2014, my son's life was disrupted because the family court system favored shared parenting, and ten years later, the family court system continued to ignore the toxic environment that he had to endure.

My son is fifteen years old almost sixteen, and the judge declined to hear from him about his lived experiences. The GAL and the judge did not listen to his wishes and desires even though there was an agreement that he would have a say in the parenting plan. The GAL did not care that he was uncomfortable and did not want to live with his father. The GAL stated that he is smart he can figure it out.

If he committed a crime, they would hold him accountable for his actions and possibly try in as an adult, but in the family court system he is incapable of speaking about his experiences. No child would refuse to leave a place that is safe and fun. This court system is already flawed, and this bill will make it worse for the preferred parent to protect their children and fight for their voices to be heard. Put yourself in the place of a child whose scars are internal and not physical, and you are crying out for help, and no one is willing to listen because the parent has money and "looks" like a good person.

My son cannot enjoy being a fifteen almost sixteen-year-old because the courts refused to acknowledge his documented experiences. He is wishing his life away so he can hurry and turn eighteen so that he can be free. His wishing his life away hurts me deeply, and there isn't anything that I can do about it. The family court system is not a safe place for any parent trying to help their children have a voice and get out of unhealthy homes to live in peace and enjoy their lives.

As a mental health therapist, I was forced to witness my child develop a trauma bond with his father. The courts ordered no contact with me for 30 days, which was extended to almost 90 days, and I received updates from the judge continuing the separation because my son started giving more than one-word sentences. The judge ignored that my son was depressed and losing weight. The judge was satisfied with more than one-word answers and that he only spoke when

necessary. This is nothing more than Stockholm syndrome, which is a type of trauma bond where the captive shifts into survival mode and looks like they are joining with their captor. Children are being traumatized for the sake of parental rights. These children will spend most of their adulthood trying to heal from their childhood experiences. This shouldn't be. The Family court system has been traumatizing children for decades, relying on their resilience. Research and the number of adults seeking counseling due to being forced to live with unhealthy parents is on the rise. The children who are aging out of the system are speaking about the abuse they experienced and how the family court system perpetuated the abuse.

Help give my son and other children a voice without being traumatized. Please do not support HB 14. Instead, look at proven solutions that address the dangers of domestic violence for the survivors and their children navigating the family court system.

This bill will completely silence the voices of the children. This bill will add to the damage that is already being done. Vote NO on HB 14.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalind Smith