



**Proponent Testimony HB 5
Senate Judiciary Committee
Catholic Conference of Ohio
November 13th, 2024**

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary 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.

Thousands of children are currently awaiting adoption, and future parents are eager to grow their families. Modernizing the Ohio adoption system is an urgent legislative task, one with a profound moral dimension. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have consistently celebrated the love and mercy involved in placing a child for adoption and receiving a vulnerable person into a new family. In their 2020 document, “Accompanying Expectant Mothers Considering Adoption”, the Catholic bishops look to Maya, a woman who discovered that she was pregnant during her freshman year of college. Maya reflects on her own choice to place her child up for adoption and concludes that a moral society: affirms that adoption is a loving choice, lets compassion guide our policy, and provides mothers with support during and after pregnancy and placement. The Catholic faith also sees in adoptive parents exemplars of those who fulfill the “works of mercy” that Jesus enjoined on His followers to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and care for those in need. 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 HB 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.