

Proponent Testimony
HB 5
Adoption Network Cleveland: The Ohio Family Connection
Betsie Norris, Executive Director

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

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit Proponent testimony on HB 5. I regret not being able to offer the testimony in person, but appreciate your consideration of our thoughts.

Adoption Network Cleveland (ANC) is a non-profit organization whose goals are to advocate, educate and support those who are impacted by adoption and foster care. We are not a placement agency. ANC works closely with birth families, adoptive families and adoptees themselves throughout the lifelong journey of foster care and adoption.

As a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advocate for better adoption policy, educate Ohioans about adoption and foster care, and support the numerous individuals whose lives are affected by adoption, Adoption Network Cleveland supports the state's efforts to modernize, update and standardize adoption procedures.

We particularly support these provisions:

- HB 5 supports adoption by family members through extending the provision allowed in foster situations that allows for time spent in the home to count toward the six-month waiting period to apply in kinship adoptions as well as foster adoptions.
- HB 5 allows for a foreign decree of adoption to be accepted and considered final in Ohio if certain conditions are met, rather than requiring the adoptive parent to petition the court for re-finalization of the adoption.
- HB 5 adds safeguards for children who might be placed for adoption as a result of child trafficking.
- HB 5 reduces barriers to adult siblings who seek to adult their minor siblings. This is especially pertinent in foster care situations and supports adoption by family members.

We look forward to additional opportunities for more substantive changes to Ohio law to improve adoption and would be happy to offer suggestions.

Thank you for considering my testimony as you consider HB 5.